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The Round-About-Town Sport.

BY J. C. COWDRICK.



"YOU SAY YOU ARE INNOCENT OF THIS CRIME," ASKED THE LAWYER. "AS INNOCENT AS YOU ARE," WAS THE REPLY.

THE
Round-About-Town Sport:
OR,

The Lawyer Detective's Tangle.

An Episode of New York City Courts
and Life.

BY J. C. COWDRICK,

AUTHOR OF "GILBERT OF GOTHAM," "DUKE DANIELS," "PRINCE PAUL," "SHERIFF STILLWOOD," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER COVER OF NIGHT.

THERE was a moon, but the night was dark in spite of that.

It was one of those nights upon which Dame Nature bestows a unique touch of her handiwork for sake of variety.

Not a star could be seen, and even the moon could barely peer through the upper cloud-vail, while below the storm-seud was speeding inland, as though in flight to escape the rising wrath of its parent—Old Ocean.

A cemetery, of all places, is most dolorous on such a night; and of all cemeteries, white-sentined Greenwood, that silent city of the dead, in its awful vastness, was, on this night, particularly gruesome. Nevertheless, shadowy forms were moving among the ghostly slabs and monuments.

Not that the place was full of these shadows; there were but four, and one of these was a "shadow" in a double sense.

Three of the forms were moving together, while the other came stealing after them silently and cautiously, as though determined to learn the meaning of their nocturnal visit. The latter was a man of heavy build, grim of visage and roughly clad, and in his right hand he carried a heavy Colt revolver.

Of the other three, one was a tall man, wearing a slouch hat, and enveloped in a long and ample cloak; another, walking beside the first, was shorter in stature and bearded, wearing a rough hat and heavy coat, and carrying a pick; while the third, who followed a pace behind these two, unmistakably a laborer, was armed with spade and bar.

The man in the big cloak, in which he seemed to hug himself, was clearly the leading spirit of the party.

It was he who led the way, and he seemed to understand where he was going thoroughly well, and not to be in any uncertainty regarding his course, dark as it was, and unpiloted.

In this manner they proceeded for a considerable distance, shadower and shadowed, till at last, coming upon a rise of ground where the rays from a distant electric light fell faintly upon them, they stopped, and the man in the big cloak looked carefully around.

The moment they stopped the man with the revolver sunk down behind a convenient headstone, letting his unbuttoned outer coat slip from his shoulders as he did so, and, with revolver ready for instant use, watched to learn what was going to be done, his left hand clutching a sturdy sapling to steady his kneeling position, precaution against betraying his presence.

"This is the spot," spoke the tall man hoarsely, hugging himself in his big cloak.

"You are certain of it, are you?" questioned the bearded man. "We cannot afford to make a mistake, you know."

"I am positive it is the spot," the tall man subjoined. "I came here by daylight, studied the surroundings, and marked this grave, as you see."

"There can be no question about it, then. We will get down to business immediately, for the sooner the disagreeable task is done and we are out of here, the better."

He struck the pick into the grave as he finished, and the laborer, throwing off hat and coat, seized it and began to ply it vigorously.

The watcher retained his position, silent and alert, and the other men, while the laborer prepared the clay for the spade, spread out a big cloth close to the edge of the rounded mound.

Taking up the spade, next, the laborer be-

gan to remove the earth, taking care to throw each spadeful upon the cloth that had been laid to receive it, the two men standing silently by and watching the progress made; the man with the revolver in hand crouching lower and awaiting the result.

Larger and higher grew the heap of dirt upon the spread cloth, lower sunk the hole from which it was being taken, and finally the spade struck upon a box, the hollow sound it gave forth signaling that the work was nearly done.

A little longer and the cover had been bared, and the laborer handing out his pick and spade, set about opening the box and getting at the coffin it inclosed.

Still the watcher made no sign or movement to betray his presence, but patiently waited.

The box was opened; then the coffin, and a body was dragged forth.

Now the grim and alert shadower leaned forward with renewed interest, his revolver ready for defense or aggression, either, as its service might be required.

His work done, the laborer stepped back out of the way, and the other men took charge of the body that had been exhumed. It did not seem to be their purpose to take it away with them.

The bearded man stooped beside the cold and lifeless clod, tore open in front the garments in which it was clad, and then, by the light of a small bull's-eye, now brought into play for the first time, in the hands of him in the big cloak, the watcher caught the glint of a bright knife.

What followed was the work of a few moments only. The bearded man plied his knife with skill and dispatch, something was removed from the body which was quickly wrapped in a waiting piece of rubber cloth, and the operator rose, his task done.

They stepped back, this man and he of the big cloak, the light already out of sight again, and the laborer was told to replace the body where he had found it.

Still the shadower took no action in the matter.

The work of replacing the body, and of filling the grave and rounding it up as it had been found, occupied quite as much time as had been spent already. It was done with care, that there might be no suspicion that it had been disturbed, as the use of the cloth to keep the dirt off the grass had witnessed.

Finally they departed as silently as they had come, the watcher retaining his position until they had passed well out of hearing as well as out of sight, when he rose and stretched himself, having now put away his weapon.

"Well, this goes ahead of anything of the kind I ever seen," he said to himself. "If they were diggin' for treasure, I meant to come in for a share, or if they was goin' to take the body, I had a notion I'd demand hush-money of 'em; but when they coolly took out the dead man's in'ards, that knocked me flabbergasted."

He picked up his discarded overcoat and hung it upon his shoulders again as it had been at first, not because it was cold, but to keep off the driving mist that was spraying upon him.

"Yes, that beats all, even in my line," he said further, looking around. "I wonder what it all means, anyhow? They ain't no school students, they ain't; they're too old fer that, and students don't dig they're own cadavers, as a rule. Besides, they want the whole thing, while these fellows took somethin' of the insides. Here is a puzzle, Hugh Awstin, as sure as you're born!"

He reflected, rubbing his chin, as he stood and looked at the grave that had been so newly rounded up afresh.

What could it mean, anyhow?

"This was the spot they wanted, that's certain, for the big fellow said he had been here by daylight and marked it. It's a new plant—anyhow not very old, and there's no headstone up yet, or I might find out who the cadaver was. Hello! here's a stick; that may tell the story jest as good as a granite shaft! Where's my matches? I must get onto this thing if I can. Ha! here we are; and now to see what we'll see—if I can make a match hold fire in this beastly weather."

Bending over the stick and sheltering it with his coat, he struck a match.

"Good enough!" he ejaculated, after a moment of silence. "That tells the story. The dead man was Philip Kassinger. Now, who was he? Kassinger—Kassinger? I am sure I have heard that name before, but where and when was it? Kassinger? It is familiar enough to me— Ha! now I have it. It is the name my boy John has mentioned of late. What mystery is here, anyhow? Hang it! what an idiot I was not to follow them and learn where they went! I could have come back here by daylight and got this information. Well, it's too late now to mourn about that; I'll see John, and we'll get at the bottom facts in this case, or bu'st!"

CHAPTER II.

UNCLE AND NIECE.

GOWER TERWILLIGER brought his fist down upon the massive table with a thump akin to thunder.

"Girl, have a care what you say!" he stormed. "You are not of age yet, and I am your lawful guardian. I say you shall marry Theodore Peterson!"

"And I declare as firmly and emphatically that I will not!" was the defiant retort. "I care not if you are my uncle and guardian; I would refuse even were you my father. I do not like the man."

"Pshaw! What does it matter whether you like him or not? This is a matter of pure business, and I am looking out for your best interests—"

"And your own!"

"Zounds! How dare you talk like this to me? Why, Miss Impudence, I have a good notion to shut you up and keep you on bread and water till you come to your senses. You do not know what is good for you. I am looking to your best interests, I tell you, and you are standing in your own light."

"I do not ask you to look after my interests so closely as to choose a husband for me, Gower Terwilliger. If you are really concerned for my interests, suppose you show it by restoring to me the fortune of my dead mother, which you have robbed me of. I know you, sir; I know that my welfare is the last thing you have in mind in this scheme you propose."

Gower Terwilliger was a "close-fisted, red-faced, mutton-chopped, bull-necked British beef-eater," as a certain indignant man had one day called him to his face, and indignation had prompted a description that was more truthful than elegant. It was a description that fitted his character and person like a garment made to order. He was all of that, and more; and now, as his niece glared at him, her fists clinched and eyes flashing, he seemed on the point of choking.

"Zounds! Eternal zounds!" he raged. "What is this you say to me, girl? If you were not my sister's child, I would—would—"

"The fact that I am your dead sister's child, sir, has never brought me justice at your hands. On the contrary, you have taken advantage of me on the strength of that in every way possible."

"Mildred Daniels, I'll cast you out a pauper on the streets, for this sort of talk to me!" the guardian cried, fairly purple in his rage. "You ought to be ashamed, after the way in which I have been father and mother both to you ever since you came under my care!"

"Hypocrite!" the girl sneered. "So you would like to have the world believe, I know. Two weary years more and I shall be of age, and then will come your day of reckoning. And it is of that you stand in fear. You know you have wasted my fortune, and cannot restore to me my rights when I shall come of age, and hence you are so eager to have me marry as you desire."

"This to me—to me!"

"Yes, to you, sir! You have at last roused the tiger of my nature."

"The wildest of your accursed American blood, you mean. The one mistake of your mother's life was when she married your father."

"The grandest mistake she ever made was when she sent for you to manage her business for her after my father's death. Would to God that I had never seen your face at all."

"Where would that business have been to-day, let me ask, only for me?"

"Oh, you managed it well, very well indeed, I have to admit; you managed it so well that in less than two years the bulk of it was in your own name, owing to my poor mother's blind confidence in you and her ignorance of business matters."

"Curse your impudence! I am going to manage all my business as suits me, in my own way. My business is to manage *you*, and by Heavens I'm going to do it, too! Do you understand that? I have the right and power to do it, and I'm going to exercise my right and power!"

He brought his fist down again twice upon the heavy table with a force that made the floor tremble.

"You may have the right and power, but you will find that I have a will of my own as well, and that I am going to exercise it more in the future than I have done in the past; just you understand that!"

"Then you would give me to understand that you positively will not marry the man I have picked out for you?"

"That is just what I want you to understand; I will not marry the man!"

"Well, I want *you* to understand me: You *shall* marry Theodore Peyterson, and that within a month. Make up your mind to it, and prepare yourself accordingly. That is all I have to say to you."

"You have heard my answer. I would not marry the man were I sure of going in rags and tatters all the days of my life. I do not love him. Besides, you know very well that he is engaged to my cousin, Theresa Kassinger, and I would not step between them even did I love him. So, you are doubly balked in your base scheme!"

"Balked, am I? We'll see about that! I have that young man in my power, and when I put the screws on him he'll be glad enough to give up Theresa and wed you. You do not know everything yet, my dear. No, you have some romantic love nonsense in your head concerning that beggar, William Gerredson, but I'll knock that all out of you if I have to use the rod."

"What! Do you dare intimate that you would attempt such a thing as violence?"

"Would I? You just carry on in this way a little longer and I'll show you whether I would or not. I'm the same as a parent to you, you must understand, and in the eyes of the law you are only a child. If a parent hasn't the right to whip an unruly child, then we had better give up altogether."

"That is just what you had better do, you unmasked villain! Why, did you do such a thing as that, I believe I would take your life! I feel that I would kill you in spite of myself! You detestable *coward*! You ought to blush with shame at the thought of doing such a thing! Really, I cannot find words strong enough to express my supreme disgust and contempt of such a wretch!"

"Ha! that fires you up, does it? I thought I would strike the right note if I mentioned the name of William Gerredson. That is where your affection lies, is it? Well, you'll never wed *him*; that I assure you. Besides, is not he engaged to your other cousin, Theresa's sister? It is a poor rule that will not work both ways, my angelic Mildred. You could not step between him and Beatrice, could you? Come, that would not be honorable, you know."

"I have no intention of doing so, *dear uncle!*" with some of his own irony in the tone. "But, if I cannot marry where I do love, since you have probed the secret, I certainly will not marry where I do not love. You cannot force me to do so—I defy you to do it—defy you here to your teeth!" and she posed like a young Diana aroused to danger, and defiant.

"Have a care."

"I care for nothing! I would take my life first! I would do *any* desperate thing before I would yield."

"You will have the chance. If you prefer death to a life of ease and wealth with Theodore Peyterson, go ahead; your demise would not inconvenience me any, I assure you."

"I am aware of it; no deed you might attempt could surprise me, even to murder!"

"Well, you shall never wed Gerredson, for I'll take such steps as will put a veto to that. So, the next best thing for you to do is to carry out your threat, for, unless you do, marry Theodore Peyterson you shall! I have

taken oath to it. I'll show you who is going to be master in this matter."

"Then hear my vow," the girl cried, wildly and desperately, throwing herself upon her knees and raising her clasped hands on high. "Spirit of my dead mother, hear me! Rather than submit to what my very soul recoils from, I will free my spirit and go to you! I'll do anything, no matter what, to balk these villainous machinations against me! I hold my life as naught!"

For a moment longer she remained there, silent, as if in prayer; then she rose, her whole manner changed.

Heretofore she had been all meekness, and had submitted to the will of her uncle-guardian in all things. At last she had turned upon him. Now, as she rose, she was calm and composed, outwardly.

"Ha! that was pretty!" the villain applauded. "You ought to be on the stage Mildred, on my soul you ought! You would win fame and fortune there, I know. Suppose you try it when I turn you out. That is what I am going to do, unless you do as I command you."

"If you do that I'll expose your villainy at once and show you to the world as you are—an infamous scoundrel."

"What! You dare to threaten? Have a care, girl, or out you go this moment!"

He rose and advanced upon her, his brow lowering and his whole aspect that of a desperate man equal even to murder itself.

"Back!" she warned him, drawing a slender dagger from a fold of her dress. "If you lay one finger on me I'll drive this blade into your vile body! I hate you—oh! how I hate you, execrable scoundrel that you are!"

He recoiled from before her, as she accompanied her vehement words with a look such as he had never seen upon her face or in her eyes before. The next moment she turned and was gone from the room—he staring at the door for a moment when it had closed, and then shaking his fist toward it furiously.

CHAPTER III.

THE KASSINGER MURDER MYSTERY.

"MURDER! Murder! Murder!"

The startling cry came from the library of the Kassinger residence.

In a few moments a trembling, white-faced group was gathered at the door, under which a slender, dark-red stain had issued. It was human blood!

The door was ajar, and there on the velvet carpet lay two girlish forms, one with a dagger buried in her side, the other prone across the body of the first, motionless.

The first was dead, as the drawn, waxy features plainly indicated, and the other seemed to be. No wonder the servants stood spellbound, their own faces like unto death itself in the ashy paleness of each one.

"What is the matter?" the feeble voice of Leonard Kassinger was calling down from the floor above. "What has happened?"

"My God, sir!" the butler managed to gasp, "one of your daughters has been murdered—maybe both!"

"Great heavens! Come and carry me down—carry me down instantly!"

Leonard Kassinger was a chronic invalid who had been confined to the house for years and to his room the greater part of the time. When he did come down he had to be carried and placed in an invalid's chair that awaited him.

The butler and another servant sprung immediately to obey his imperative and urgent, though feeble, command, and he was brought quickly down.

He did not speak till he had been placed in his chair and wheeled into the library.

"Which is it?" he then demanded. "My God, which is it?"

To this time silence, awful and death-like, had been observed; now it was all at once broken by cries and sobs from the pale and terrified servants as they recoiled from the fearful sight, the bereaved father's grief having awakened them from their apathy.

"Which is it?" the butler repeated the demand, addressing the housekeeper. "Is it not Beatrice?"

"Oh! I do not know, I do not know," the housekeeper moaned.

"Lift up the one," Mr. Kassinger directed.

This was done, and the limp, warm body that had lain prone across the one that was cold in death was laid upon a lounge.

"Is she dead, too?" inquired the invalid father, with a calmness that was plainly forced. "Do not tell me she is, for that would kill me. Great Heavens! who can have done so hellish a deed?"

"No, sir; she lives," the butler quickly reported. "Evidently she just made the discovery, sir, and fainted as soon as she gave the alarm."

"See which one it is—quickly, quickly. Look at her watch, that will tell you."

The butler drew the girl's watch from its pocket, and glancing at it, said:

"This one is Theresa, sir."

A great sigh escaped the feeble man, and he turned his gaze upon his other child.

"Who can have done it? who can have done it?" he muttered. "Where was the motive for so terrible a crime?"

By this time the butler had left the living young lady, and now he laid his hand tenderly upon the forehead of the one that was dead.

"Dead," he said briefly. "She is cold, sir, and has been dead for hours. I cannot understand it. Well may you ask who can have done so heinous a deed."

He was an intelligent man, this butler—Cranford by name; just such a person as Mr. Kassinger needed in his helpless state, a man who had made himself useful in a thousand ways during his ten years of service.

The housekeeper had now stepped to the side of the fainted girl on the lounge and was chafing her hands, at the same time urging upon the others to bring some water that she might bathe her face, hoping thus the more quickly to restore her to consciousness.

"What is to be done?" the butler asked, rising.

"What must be done, Cranford?" the helpless invalid inquired, dependingly.

"The police must be told, sir, I would say," was the suggestion made. "The guilty wretch must be caught."

"Yes, yes! The police! Send at once! Whoever has done this deed must be made to suffer for it! My child, my child! My poor, willful Beatrice! If you could only speak to us!"

Excitement now gave way to grief, and the tears of the feeble old man ran down his face like rain.

The butler lost no time in sending word to the nearest police-station, while the housekeeper and the other women-servants continued their efforts with the fainted girl, efforts which were presently rewarded.

Beatrice Kassinger and Theresa were twins, so nearly alike in looks and form that it was hard to tell one from the other—hard even for those who knew them well, and especially so if the young ladies themselves playfully added to the confusion.

This they had done, occasionally, for a little fun; but, to the members of the household, there were differences with which they had all become familiar, differences chiefly of character and disposition; secondarily, in the few trinkets and jewels each wore. Under the present extraordinary circumstances the latter had become of most importance.

When Theresa opened her eyes a shiver passed over her, at the same time a moan escaped her lips.

"Is it true?" she hoarsely whispered. "Is it true, or have I had a horrible dream?"

"Alas! it is only too true," the housekeeper answered sorrowfully.

The girl sat up, pressing her head with hands.

"Poor Beatrice! poor Beatrice!" she sighed. "Oh! papa, papa! who can have done a thing so horrible? Who has killed my poor, dear sister?"

She staggered to where he sat in his wheeled chair, threw herself upon her knees beside him, and took his hand in her usual fond way, bathing it with her tears as she pressed it to her face.

For several minutes no one spoke, while these two supported each other in their great grief.

"How came you to make the discovery, Theresa?" Mr. Kassinger presently asked.

"Why, I saw she had not slept in her bed, when I stepped in to speak to her, after dressing, and I came down at once in search of

her. I looked first in the bath, then in the sitting-room, and just glanced in here as I was making my way down to inquire of Jadson, when the horrible truth was revealed to me."

The Jadson referred to was the house-keeper.

"My poor child!" said the fond father, pityingly. "To think that it had to be you to make the terrible discovery."

Their tears broke forth afresh, and so they were found when the police came to the scene of the awful crime.

A detective-sergeant, with a couple of officers, had been sent to investigate the matter.

The sergeant asked questions, and the particulars, as far as already known to the reader, were quickly in his possession.

"A mysterious case," he promptly decided. "Suicide is out of the question; her own hand could never have plunged the dagger where it is, with such force. It was a sure and vengeful blow by a murderous hand. Have you any suspicions?"

"None, sir," answered Mr. Kassinger, sadly.

"Has any robbery been done?"

"We have not looked, sir. We have been unable to collect our powers of thought, almost."

"Yes, I suppose so. That's natural enough. I'll take a look around, if one of your servants will guide me. This is your butler, I take it?"

He indicated Cranford.

"Yes. Cranford, conduct him, and investigate thoroughly."

Some ten minutes was spent in the task, resulting in the finding that no robbery had been committed.

The eyes of the alert detective had been everywhere, as he went through the house, but so far as the finding of any clue was concerned he was baffled.

"Well, it's a puzzler," he commented, when done. "I learn that the victim did not go to her room last night. At what hour did the rest of the household retire? Why did the victim remain up?"

"She had company," said the housekeeper.

"Company? Who was it?"

"Mr. Gerredson."

"And who is Mr. Gerredson? I must know everything that can be told me."

"Good heavens!" gasped Theresa, in a hoarse whisper. "Can it be possible— But, no, no!"

"Can what be possible?" demanded the sharp-eared detective. "This is no time to withhold anything, Miss Kassinger. What do you mean?"

"It is terrible, terrible!" gasped the house-keeper.

"You must tell what you know," the detective sergeant sternly insisted. "I demand it."

"Yes, yes, withhold nothing," supported Mr. Kassinger. "No matter where the blow falls, the crime must be punished, the guilty we must suffer."

"Young lady, speak!" the sergeant urged authoritatively.

"If the truth must be told, I'll tell it, though I know the suspicion can never rest upon Mr. Gerredson. I heard him and Beatrice quarreling after I left them here and retired."

"Ha! there may be something in this. You heard it, too, I have reason to believe," turning to the housekeeper.

"Yes, I have to admit it, sir."

"Could you hear anything that was said?"

"I heard some words."

"What were they?"

"Must I tell?"

"You certainly must. If you refuse to tell me, you cannot refuse the coroner when he comes to inquire into the matter."

"Well, from what I heard, I understood Mr. Gerredson to be jealous of his rival, and I heard him almost make a threat against him."

"Who is this rival?"

"Mr. John Awstin."

"Did you, too, hear this?" turning to Theresa again.

"Yes, since it must be told; I did, and worse: I heard William Gerredson say he had rather see my sister dead than the wife of such a man as Awstin. And then they had

hot and angry words, after which all was still and I heard no more."

Others among the servants corroborated these statements, and before the detective-sergeant took his leave he had a well-defined suspicion against William Gerredson as the person who had done the deed; and not least among his points was the fact that the dagger handle was marked with the letters—W. G.

CHAPTER IV.

INNOCENT? OR GUILTY?

"Is William Gerredson at home?"

One of a couple of men in plain clothing put the question at the door of a good-looking house on a quiet street.

"I think he is in, sir, but not up yet," was the response of the servant who had answered the bell. "I will step up and see. What name, please?"

"Never mind the name," said the foremost of the pair, entering closely followed by his companion. "We'll go right up with you and you can show us the door. It will be all right."

The servant looked as though she wanted to object to this arrangement, but had not the courage, so she led the way and the men followed her.

On the third floor she tapped at a door, and a voice within demanded to know what was wanted.

"Two gentlemen to see you, sir."

"Who are they? What do they want?"

"We must see you privately for a few moments, Mr. Gerredson," spoke up one of the men.

"What is your business?"

"We have a paper which we are obliged to serve upon you, since you compel us to mention it aloud, sir."

"Oh! Wait a moment and I'll let you in."

There was a brief delay, and the door was opened to them.

The inmate of the room proved to be a good-looking young man about twenty-seven years of age.

His face was slightly pale, and he looked somewhat excited. He was clad in dressing-gown and slippers, and had evidently not been long up.

The two men pressed into the room as soon as the door was opened, closing it after them, and faced the occupant, who had stepped back with a look of rising indignation on his face.

"Who and what are you, anyhow?" he demanded.

The two men were looking around the room searchingly, taking in everything that was to be seen.

"We are police detectives, sir," the spokesman of the pair made explanation, then. "William Gerredson, you are our prisoner."

"Your prisoner!"

"Exactly."

"What is the charge?" excitedly.

"Murder, sir."

"My God!"

The young man staggered, caught a chair for support, and his gaze turned toward a light overcoat on a chair near the washstand, which, as appearances indicated, he had been cleaning when interrupted.

One of the officers now stepped forward and took the coat up.

"Ha! See here!" he called attention.

Holding up one of the sleeves he pointed to stains upon it, stains of blood not to be mistaken.

It was stained in other places, too, and the prisoner stood holding his hand to his head in a bewildered sort of way as he looked on, as though he could not comprehend it.

"We need no further proof," said the other. "Mr. Gerredson, hold out your hands."

He produced a pair of handcuffs as he spoke, and stepped forward to put them upon the wrists of his prisoner, who recoiled in horror.

"No, no!" he cried. "There is some terrible mistake here! I have done no murder! I know not how that blood came upon my coat, gentlemen; it has puzzled me ever since I discovered it."

"Do you recognize this weapon?" and the other officer produced a delicate dagger, holding it up to view.

"Yes, yes, it is mine; I do not deny it."

The accused man appeared half crazed. He held yet more tightly to the chair, at the same time pressing his hand the more frantically to his head. It had the manner of forced acting.

"Then you are the man we want," said the officer with the handcuffs. "Take care that you do not offer resistance."

With quick and powerful action he laid hold upon the prisoner, and the handcuffs were snapped into place on his wrists, the horror of the situation causing a perspiration to break out upon the prisoner's forehead.

"This is terrible," he gasped, faintly, sinking down upon the chair. "I am innocent of any murder—I swear to you I am innocent! Who has been killed? You have not told me that."

"It is hardly necessary, sir. Your fine acting will not save you."

"Heavens! will you not believe me when I swear I am innocent of any such deed? Tell me, who has been killed?"

"Beatrice Kassinger."

"My God! Oh, my God! It is not true—it can not be true!"

He sprung to his feet at mention of the name, his eyes fairly starting out of their sockets.

The detective-sergeant and his assistant looked at each other and smiled.

It was so plain a case that there could be no doubt about it, and the man's acting only served to amuse them.

"When was she killed, and how?" the prisoner demanded. "Tell me all about it, I beg of you! It is news to me, I swear it is news to me! Poor Beatrice! Great heavens! it is more than I can bear!"

He clapped his manacled hands to his face, and sobs shook his frame.

If acting, it was superb.

"How can you deny it, in the face of such proof?" the detective-sergeant demanded.

"Your dagger was found buried in her side, and here we have taken you in the act of cleaning blood from your overcoat. You were heard quarreling with her last night."

"I did not do it! I swear I did not do it! It is a horrible mystery to me, and I cannot comprehend it."

"Let me warn you that whatever you may say now will be used against you at your trial."

"I can say nothing but the truth—that I am innocent."

"All the proof is against you."

"Yes, I see it is. I cannot understand. I am bewildered and broken with grief. Beatrice dead—oh, my God! Beatrice, my love, my life!"

"This has been carried about far enough," spoke the detective-sergeant, coldly. "You must come with us, sir. I will release one of your hands while you prepare for the street."

"First tell me all about this terrible affair, I beg of you. You do not believe me innocent—I cannot blame you; but, yet again do I swear that I am as innocent of this crime as either of you, and I implore you to tell me the particulars of the awful matter."

"Do you promise not to try to escape, or to do injury to yourself, if I release your hand?"

"Yes, yes, I promise that."

"Very well. The worse for you if you do make such attempt. I will mention the facts of the case while you are dressing."

And this was done, while the prisoner was nervously preparing himself to accompany his captors, the facts being stated substantially as they are known to the reader.

"Mystery, mystery," the prisoner sorrowfully mused, when he had heard all.

"Then you still hold out? You still pretend that you are innocent, when the evidence against you is so dark and damning?"

"I speak only the truth when I declare my innocence. When I parted from Miss Kassinger last night she was alive and in health, standing by the table in the library. It is true that we parted in anger."

"How, then, came this blood on your coat?"

"I do not know; I discovered it this morning, and it puzzled me."

"And how came this dagger of yours to be the weapon with which the deed was done?"

"I do not know, I do not know. The weapon has been missing from my room for

some time. I always kept it there on the mantel, as an ornament."

"How long had you missed it?"

"It must now be nearly a month since I first noticed that it was gone."

"Here is the first appearance of proof for your statement of innocence, then. Of course you made inquiry about it, when you missed it, and can easily prove that."

The prisoner's face darkened.

"Everything is against me," he said despondently. "I made no mention of it. I did not value the thing highly, anyhow, and thought if I kept still about it I would be just as likely to find it as though I made much ado."

"Away goes that slight prop, then. Mr. Gerredson, the case looks dark for you, indeed."

"I can but admit it, sir. Still, I am innocent; nor can I imagine who the guilty one can be."

"Nor can we, if not yourself. The proof is enough to send you to the chair, however, and I don't see a ray of hope for you."

"Is it certain it was not suicide?"

"So we have decided. The dagger was in such a position that it could not have been driven there by her own hand. But your quarrel with her; what was that about?"

"It was her own fault. She wrought me to anger by her persistent misconstruing of whatever I said. It appeared to me that she was resolved upon working me into a rage. I have nothing to deny so far as the quarrel goes, and it all came about my rival, John Awstin."

"Who is he?"

"He is a nobody, sir. Somehow he has gotten a foothold in society, but he is a cur, at best, and what angered me most was to have comparisons drawn between him and me to my disadvantage. I never had seen Miss Kassinger so unreasonable before in my life, and that's why I asked if it was positively not suicide. She seemed to be out of her right mind."

"Even could it be said that it might have been suicide, that would not explain the blood upon your coat."

"No, that is true. It is more than my bewildered mind can grasp."

"Perhaps this fellow Awstin is the man?"

"I cannot think him so base as that. He's too much a coward for so terrible a deed. No, no; I will not think that of him, much as I despise him; then, where was the motive? And, too, what motive could I have had?—I who loved her so?"

The points could not be settled, and a little later on the officers left the house with their prisoner in charge.

CHAPTER V.

SORROW-STRICKEN HOME.

A SOLEMN and awful hush had come over the Kassinger residence.

It affected the morbidly curious crowd in the street, holding them in respectful silence. They simply stood gazing in awe.

The news of the crime had spread by this time, and for an hour reporters had been pressing for particulars at the door, only to be turned away unsatisfied and to a degree antagonistic.

Presently another man sprung up the steps, as those who had preceded him had done, and the crowd expected to see him, too, turned away, but in this they were one and all mistaken, for he was promptly admitted into the house as soon as the butler saw who he was.

This personage was a fine-looking person of thirty or thereabouts, well dressed, and wearing well the air of a gentleman.

His face was pale and his manner expressive of keenest grief.

"Cranford, is this terrible report true?" he made haste to inquire of the butler.

"Alas! it is, Mr. Peyterson," was the solemn, respectful answer. "It is too terrible for belief, almost. No one can realize it's so."

"It almost struck me dumb when I heard it, Cranford. But, what of Mr. Kassinger? How did he bear up under the blow? And Theresa—Miss Kassinger?—I suppose it has prostrated her."

"It was a sad blow for them both, sir, but they have borne up wonderfully well, all things considered. If you wish to see Miss

Theresa, you will find her in her own sitting-room up-stairs, sir. She told me to say this to you, if you should call, sir."

"I will go up at once."

Theodore Peyterson and Theresa Kassinger were engaged to be married, and the wedding had been set for a day not far distant.

When the caller reached the door of the private sitting-room, he tapped, and was told to enter.

He found his affianced alone with her grief.

"My poor Theresa!" he cried, hurrying to her, holding out his hands. "No words can express the sympathy I feel for you at such a time as this."

She rose and yielded herself to his embrace, laying her head upon his shoulder, silently weeping.

They stood thus for some moments.

Finally she drew herself gently away, resuming her seat, and motioned for him to take a chair at her side.

"You have heard all about it?" she asked.

"I have heard the one terrible fact," was the response. "Do not attempt to give me the particulars; I will learn them elsewhere."

"I appreciate your wish to spare me the pain of talking about it, Theodore, but that is nothing, now, after the great first shock struck numb every nerve in my whole body—almost paralyzed me."

Slowly and sadly she gave him the particulars.

"And the police found no clue?" he asked, when she had done.

"That brings me to the most painful part, if possible," was the reply.

"Why, whom do they suspect? Does suspicion point to some known person? I have not heard."

"They suspect Will Gerredson."

"Her lover? Impossible! They might as well suspect me."

"It is true, and it looks dark, indeed, for him. They quarreled last night, and the dagger is marked with his initials—W. G."

"This makes it more terrible than ever, to think of such a thing as possible. What can have been his motive? But, it is folly to think of him as a murderer!"

"If he did do it, it was jealousy."

"Jealous of whom?"

"John Awstin."

"Pshaw! It cannot be possible. Why, Beatrice never had a thought for that fellow, had she?"

"I am sure I do not know. She confided very little in me, lately. I know she went out with him frequently, and his name was mentioned in their high words last night."

"It is terrible, truly. But, I cannot think of Will Gerredson as a murderer. I would sooner suspect Awstin himself."

"But, where was his motive?"

"To keep Will from wedding her, it might be."

"I should think he would have thought first of putting his rival out of the way, and not the girl he loved."

"I do not know. It is all a terrible mystery, and it is a sad blow for you and your father—for all of us, for that matter. Now our happiness must be deferred, my darling."

"It is a sad time, now, to speak of—"

"Pardon it; I spoke before I thought. Let it not be mentioned between us, at any rate not now."

"Since you have spoken of it, however, I will tell you what I think about it, Theodore. We can be married, in the most quiet manner, at the time set—"

"You mean it, Theresa?"

"Certainly. This sad event is something unlooked for, something that could not be foreseen, and nothing can make any difference to poor Beatrice now. What the world says, that we need not care for. Our wedding will be but a sad event, anyhow, at the best."

"Bless you, my darling. I would not have dared to suggest it, but it is the most sensible thing for us to do, I think. However, no more needs be said about it at present. When will the inquest be held?"

"To-morrow, at ten o'clock."

"Then you must compose yourself all you can to face that trying ordeal. It will tax your strength to the utmost, perhaps."

"I am prepared for anything, Theodore. I lived through the first shock, and now I

am more an automaton than I am a living and breathing woman. My very blood seems to be standing still."

"No one can wonder, my darling. I will leave you, now, and go to your father. What you need most of all is to be alone and quiet."

"Maybe you are right. You will find papa in his room."

The lover embraced his affianced, imprinting a kiss upon her fair cheek, and withdrew, leaving her as he had found her—all but dumb under the burden of her great and sudden grief.

Peyterson went direct to the room of Mr. Kassinger, where he found him in a great armchair, which he occupied by day when he remained in his room.

He had been carried up again after the departure of the detective-sergeant and his men.

The old man held out his hand to him in silence.

"It is a sad blow, Mr. Kassinger, and you have my fullest sympathy," the younger man spoke.

A pressure was the response.

"I have just come from Theresa, and she seems quite composed. The wonder is that the shock did not kill both her and you. Would that I could do something to assuage your grief."

"Sit down," the invalid invited. "I want to talk with you."

Peyterson drew up a chair and sat down close by the old gentleman, giving him all attention.

"Yes, it is a terrible blow," the feeble old man said, "but it might have been yet more terrible had it been my favorite, Theresa. Thank God, she is spared to me yet!"

Peyterson was silent. With the interest he had at stake, he could say nothing without appearing selfish.

"She is spared to me," the old man repeated, "and I can bear it. Not that I did not love Beatrice, but Theresa was my favorite. Ever at my side in times of trouble—I miss her even now when there is the best of excuses for her absence. She thinks her grief makes mine the harder to bear, poor child!"

"I feel sure she holds your sorrow first in mind, sir."

"There is no question about that. But, what do you think about the terrible suspicion against Gerredson? Do you think it can be true that he is the guilty man, Theodore?"

"It does not seem possible, Mr. Kassinger; I would never have believed it of him; and yet—"

"Yet all the proof so far is against him. I hope it is not so, I hope he can clear himself, for I always liked the boy. The motive seems such a silly one, for a fellow of his strength of character."

"It does, truly. I hope, with you, that he will be found guiltless. But, where else can suspicion fall?"

"The poor child had another lover."

"Awstin?"

"Yes."

"Do you suspect him?"

"No, no; do not understand me that way; I merely mention him."

"I had rather suspect him than Mr. Gerredson, Mr. Kassinger, though it is hard to think him capable of so heinous a deed."

"And then the lack of *motive!* Jealousy is a weak motive, it seems to me, for in that case the rivals would have been more likely to have sought the lives of each other."

"You are right. It is impenetrable."

Presently their talk was interrupted by the coming in of Theresa.

"You must pardon me, papa," she said with sad sweetness, "for leaving you so long alone. I will try to make up for it now. I hope Theodore has filled my place well since he came in."

She took a seat on the other side of her parent, taking one of his withered hands in hers and fondling it tenderly.

The old man looked at her intently, without speaking, tears filling his eyes.

A little later on the detective-sergeant was announced, and Mr. Kassinger gave instructions to have him shown up to that room, and when he came he brought the news concerning Gerredson.

It was a terrible blow for them all, and especially for the invalid, who had thought a

good deal of the young man. The proofs in hand were such as could not be doubted, and the detective-sergeant declared it to be the plainest case he had ever had anything to do with in his life.

CHAPTER VI.

A NOCTURNAL VISITOR.

WILLIAM GERREDSON had been, of course, lodged in the Tombs prison.

Here, besides prisoners awaiting trial in the police courts and special sessions, persons accused or convicted of higher crimes are always imprisoned.

A gloomy and forbidding pile by day, by night the Tombs is suggestive of some gaunt and grisly relic of ages past. By a very slight stretch of the imagination, a famished Babylonian lion may be expected to emerge from the lugubrious portico, or a hideous crocodile of the Nile to drag its slimy length along the wide, dark stone steps.

This building, if you have never seen it, is said to be, and undoubtedly is, the most perfect specimen of pure Egyptian architecture anywhere outside of Egypt, and it ought to be one of the most imposing structures in the metropolis. Perhaps it would be, did not its situation detract from its appearance, for it is situated in a hollow, and its massive proportions are really dwarfed into insignificance by the unfortunate location in which it is discovered.

The night following in order the events of the preceding chapters was one of radiant moonlight. A turn of the wind had driven back the storm-clouds of the previous night, and Nature was in one of her mildest moods.

As the moonlight fell aslant upon the Tombs prison, a beautiful effect in light and shadow was produced; and the gloomy pile shown in all its massive grandeur.

The hour was not early when a woman emerged into the moonlight from the north side of the block the prison occupies, and hastened along to the main entrance.

This main entrance is on Centre street, and the moonlight was falling full upon the steps and spacious portico.

The woman was clad in a gown more befitting the drawing-room than the street, and a loose mantle enveloped the upper part of her body.

A hood attached to the mantle was drawn over her head, and it being large and held by her hand in front, nothing of her face could be seen save the eyes, bright and flashing.

There was nothing of uncertainty about her manner. She proceeded straight to the broad steps, sprung upon them, and entered the forbidding place, still holding her hood closed in front, making it serve the purpose of a mask.

She was noticed as soon as she entered where the light within fell upon her, and an employee stepped up and stopped her.

"Which way, madam?" he demanded. "What do you want?"

"My son," she almost gasped a reply—"I must see my son!"

"And who is your son?"

"William Gerredson. He has been arrested—cruelly and falsely arrested—for murder, and I must see him! I have just reached the city, and have not lost a moment in coming here. Do not refuse me, oh! do not refuse me!"

The sub-keeper looked closely at the little of the face he could see within the folds of the hood, and caught sight of the woman's front hair, low upon her forehead, and noting that it was almost snowy white, had no reason to suspect her of untruth.

"But, you will have to wait till to-morrow, and come in the regular way, you know," he declared.

"No! no!" the woman pleaded, laying a hand on his arm beseechingly. "Do not doom me to the torture of this night without seeing my boy! I must hear it from his own lips that he is innocent!"

"Impossible, madam!" was the stern decree. "You cannot come in at this hour without a special permit, and it will be more trouble than it's worth for you to try and get one, at this time of night. You will have to go away and come again. Don't be foolish, now—"

"But I have a special permit—I have a pass," the woman interrupted, with eager haste, in a low tone.

"Oh! Why didn't you say so, then? Let me see it."

"It is a hundred dollars," in a whisper.

"No, no!" the man refused, with a light laugh, but at the same time in a low tone like her own. "My job is worth more than that, madam."

"Then it is two hundred—two hundred and fifty, and the money in your hand. I must see my boy; I cannot live till morning and not hear him say he is innocent. Oh! have pity on a sorrowing mother!"

"But it can't be done, madam. I'd be seen, and there would be the deuce to pay immediately. That's quite a bait to dangle at a fellow, but I dare not bite. No, no, it can't be done. Please go away, and never let on about your tryin' to tempt me. I ought to pull you in."

"It is *five* hundred, my man—five hundred dollars all in crisp new bills, and you can give up your miserable employment here and strike out for yourself. That will carry you a long distance, you know, and put you on your feet. You must admit me; I cannot go away and not see my boy. Had I a thousand dollars, I would give that as cheerfully."

"We are watched, lady; make believe you are done and let me show you out. I must not be suspected, you know. Go around to the west entrance, hide there in the shadows, and wait till you hear the door open. Don't be afraid. I'll take the risk, for the five hundred you promise, but it has got to be in my hand before I let you in. That's right; let on your business is done and you're going. Don't get tired of waiting, even if it is two hours or longer."

The woman understood and acted, and with a bow she turned and left the place the way she had come.

"Who was that?" another keeper immediately asked.

"Oh! only a dame wantin' to see Curley the Crook," was the answer, in a tone of disgust. "She made me tired, she did."

It was more than an hour later when a door on the opposite side of the prison was cautiously opened.

As soon as it swung back on its hinges a woman appeared, ready to enter.

"I thought you would never, never come," she said, in an impatient whisper, "but I would have waited here till daylight. I must see my boy—my poor boy!"

"Where's that pass?" the traitorous fellow demanded, eagerly. "Let us have that, and I'll see that you do see your boy. Step right in, quick. Now, the money, if you please."

"Here it is, here it is, sir; it is all right, but you can step aside and count it if you want to."

There was enough light for the fellow to see he had a fistful of good money, and deciding quickly that he would take the woman's word for the amount, he thrust it into his pocket and bade her follow him.

Presently he stopped and faced her.

"Now, here's the keys," he said, giving some keys into her hand. "I'll keep back, after I indicate the door to you. If you get found out, nobody will find me, that I tell you, and you will have to face the music. But, you mustn't stay more'n two minutes, and I'll let you out, then, the same way you came in."

"My stay will be short," was the eager reply. "I only want to hear one word from my boy's lips—that he is innocent."

"All right, then, you'll likely get out again."

The man led on, soon descending a short flight of three or four steps, by a barred window through which the moonlight was streaming, and indicating that the door was the first one on the left, drew back into a corner where a dark shadow concealed him.

The woman let go her hold upon her hood, preparatory to putting the key in the lock, and as she did so, the hood fell back upon her shoulder, exposing her face to the gaze of the rascally keeper, who, though some distance away, quickly noted that she was young and fair, and that the white hair was not her own.

With a startled glance in his direction, she inserted the key in the heavy, bolt-riveted door.

The door opened readily, and once more pulling her hood over head and face, she passed quickly in.

On his cot lay the prisoner, feverishly

sleeping, but as the reflection of the moonlight came into his cell, he started up, rubbing his eyes.

"My boy! oh, my poor boy!" the woman exclaimed, just loud enough for the ears of the hiding keeper without, as though thinking to deceive him still, and in the same moment she was at the side of the cot, whispering:

"Here, take this. It is poison. You must not suffer the disgrace of the executioner's touch. Guilty though you must be, you shall have this chance to cheat the law. Take it, as soon as I am gone, and be out of your trouble so far as this matter is concerned."

"But who are—"

"Not a word! I'm a friend, of course; one who would do you this kindness. I told the keeper I was your mother. Not a word, now; I will answer nothing; I am going at once as I came—secretly."

She had moved to the door, and was out and had closed it before Gerredson was able to spring up to detain her.

Quickly turning the key, she motioned to the traitorous keeper and sprung up the steps out of the stream of moonlight, he following her promptly.

"Get out now, just as soon as you can," he whispered. "This is my last night of duty here, but I want to go off in the morning all right. They won't see me again, you bet."

"The safest thing you can do," the woman advised. "My boy may be dead before morning, for I delivered poison into his hands with which to take his life."

"You are a rather young woman, to have a son as old as that, madam. You can't fool me that way."

"You saw my face, then?"

"I did."

"Would you know me again?"

"Can't say; it was only a glimpse when you turned my way."

"Well, never betray me, but stick to your resolve to go away, for if you remain you may get into more serious trouble than you think."

"Don't worry; I'm going. I'll get leave out after you go, and that'll be the last they'll ever see of yours truly. Go, now, quick, and don't be seen, or you may not get away."

He had received his keys back again, and now he opened the door and the woman whisked out quickly and was gone.

"That woman wasn't any fool," he said to himself. "She wasn't afraid to tell me she'd left poison with the prisoner, after she had me in her power; she knew I daresn't tell on him."

He walked along through the dismal corridor, taking no precaution now to be silent, and when he was passing Gerredson's cell the prisoner called to him.

"What's wanted?" the keeper demanded.

"Was I dreaming?" was asked, "or did some one come in here a moment ago?"

"I guess you must been dreaming," the keeper answered, but smiling within himself at the thin deception.

"Yes, it must have been a dream," Gerredson carried it on. "I thought my mother came in to see me. It was a dream I had, of course. How could any one get in?"

"That's what's the matter; could any one get in? Better go back to sleep again and think no more about it. It would be as hard a matter for any one to get in as it would be for you to get out."

So saying, the traitor passed on, leaving Gerredson puzzled.

CHAPTER VII.

INQUEST AND VERDICT.

THE result of the inquest had been a foregone conclusion from the time when the facts were first made known.

It was a great occasion, and the double parlors of the house were packed as full of people as could be allowed, while the street in front was almost black.

There were reporters from all the papers in the city, detectives in disguise, both police and private, and many friends of the family. Besides these were a great many drawn by morbid curiosity.

Only for Cranford, the butler, aided by the police, the house would have been overrun, and in fact it had required their best

efforts to turn back some of those who had been determined to enter regardless of the fact that they had no claim whatever to the right to do so.

Reporters, generally, had been admitted, for Mr. Kassinger now courted the fullest and fairest investigation, determined that the truth should be brought to light if possible and the guilty person punished for the heinous deed.

William Gerredson, the prisoner, was there in the hands of the detective-sergeant and two men, looking pale and haggard but facing everybody with steady look and unfaltering mien.

In the face of the proofs against him, generally known, this was taken to be sheer bravado, while his pale, drawn countenance told against his innocence.

John Austin, his rival, too, was there, likewise pale, but appearing not a little uneasy in manner or demeanor.

He was about twenty-four years of age, with something of the air of a Bowery "gentleman" clinging to him in spite of the fact that he had a foothold in better society than could be found there.

When the coroner had obtained his jury, and all things were ready, the first witness called to the stand was Theresa Kassinger.

She had the sympathy of all as she rose and took her place in the witness's chair.

Her testimony was simple and direct, as was also that of the other members of the household who followed her. Needless to repeat it, since it is already known in substance.

Finally the prisoner was called, and every person in the room lent close attention.

"At what time did you leave this house night before last?" he was asked.

"A little after eleven o'clock, sir," the firm and steady response was given.

"How did you leave the subject of this inquiry, at that time?"

"She was standing by the table, very pale and very angry."

"Did she bid you good-night?"

"She did not. She refused to speak for some moments, and I left her in silence and went home."

"You had quarreled with her?"

"Yes."

"What was the cause of that quarrel?"

Here the prisoner told briefly the story of the rivalry of John Awstin, telling how the quarrel had commenced and how it had progressed to its climax—that was, to a point where Miss Kassinger ordered him to leave her presence and he obeyed.

"Can you explain how this dagger, admitted to be yours, came to be the weapon used?"

"I can not, sir."

"Can you tell us how the blood came to be on your coat, blood which you were in the act of washing off when you were arrested?"

"I cannot."

"You do admit that the dagger and the coat are yours?"

"I do!" peremptorily.

The next witness called to the stand was the rival lover, John Awstin.

He took his place with much nervousness of manner, apparently unaccustomed to anything of the kind, which would account for it, perhaps.

After the preliminary questions had been asked, he told what he knew about the matter, very briefly—that he had reason to believe that he himself had been the favored suitor, and that Miss Kassinger had feared Gerredson.

"What reason have you for thinking she feared him?" the coroner asked.

"From what she told me. In a conversation with her, she said—"

"Mr. Coroner, I object!"

The voice, clear, bold, firm, and strong, interrupting at that point, came from near the center of the room, and every eye was turned in that direction.

A man was seen standing upon his feet, a young man of medium height and muscular build with dark hair, eyes, and complexion; a man whose manner was perfectly cool and easy, as he faced the coroner and the jury.

"Who are you, sir? and what is the point of objection you raise?" the coroner demanded.

"My name is John Gale, sir, a lawyer by profession," was the calm response. "The point of objection I raise is, that the law does not permit a witness to testify as to conversation held with a deceased person."

"But, by what right do you raise your objection here? This is an inquest, and not a trial."

"To show your jury that they have no right to give weight to such testimony, is all, sir. I am going to defend the prisoner, if he is held for trial, sir."

"That will be the proper time, then, for you to make yourself heard," said the coroner, with a showing of dignity. "I am the coroner, and my duty is to throw all the light possible upon this matter, hence I shall allow the witness to proceed with what he was about to say."

The lawyer sat down, and the coroner bade the witness go on.

"I was going to say, sir," Awstin continued, "that in a conversation with her only a few days ago she told me that Gerredson had vowed he would kill her if she did not discard me, and—"

"That is a lie, you rascal!" the prisoner exclaimed, hotly. "I never made such a threat!"

"It is *not* a lie, so far as I am concerned," was the spirited rejoinder; "and I cannot believe that Beatrice Kassinger would tell such a falsehood."

"Can you prove that conversation by witnesses?" asked one of the jury.

"No; it was in private," was the answer.

Awstin was dismissed, at that, and the last witness, Mr. Kassinger, was called.

He was in his wheeled chair, and was not required to be moved from the place where his chair was stationed.

Numerous questions were put to him, to all of which he answered promptly and with all apparent frankness. He courted the fullest investigation.

"Who profits most by the death of your daughter, sir?" the coroner inquired.

"No one profits by her death, sir," was the answer.

"I mean financially."

"So I understood you to mean. Her death brings little profit to any one, for my fortune has been on the wane for years. At my death, of course, whatever was left would have been divided between her and her sister."

"Then your remaining daughter is the one who really profits most, in the way of money, by this untimely death."

"Oh! this is terrible, terrible!" cried Theresa, covering her face with her hands. "As though I would not give all my own fortune to bring Beatrice back again, if it could be done!"

"You don't understand the situation, sir," said Mr. Kassinger. "My living daughter is worth far more than I am worth myself today. One of her godmothers—the one for whom she was named, at death, left her a vast fortune in her own right. She, really, has kept up our establishment for years."

"Why need you let that out, papa?" the girl asked.

"The truth is what's wanted," the father responded, "and that is the truth, Theresa."

"Yes, what we want is light, and all we can get of it," the coroner added to that. "Can you throw any more light upon it, Mr. Kassinger?"

"I fail to see where I have been able to shed any at all, so far," was the response. "There is nothing further I can think of to tell. I must say, though, in spite of all the proof, that it is hard for me to think Mr. Gerredson guilty."

Almost everybody looked at the old man in surprise, at that.

It seemed strange that such a statement should be made, when the prisoner's guilt was so patent to everybody else.

"I thank you for your words, sir," the prisoner spoke up, his voice shaking for the first time. "I am innocent, sir; before God and man I swear it!"

He said it with much earnestness of manner, and it was taken at once as further proof against him—an effort to work upon the sympathies of his hearers by his dramatic vehemence.

There the inquest closed, and the case went to the jury.

Preparations were being made for them to

retire to another room, when the foreman announced that their verdict was ready.

Order was called immediately, and the verdict was handed in—that Beatrice Kassinger had come to her death by a dagger in the hand of her lover, William Gerredson—held to answer for the crime.

It was what had been expected, as said. The result had been a foregone conclusion from the very start.

The prisoner merely dropped his head lower, sorrowfully, saying nothing.

When the crowd had gone out, the detective-sergeant tapped him on the shoulder, saying:

"Come!"

"I have one request to make before you take me away," the prisoner then made known. "I would like to see the body of the poor victim of this terrible crime."

The detective-sergeant looked at Mr. Kassinger questioningly.

"His request shall be granted," the sorrowing father declared promptly. "He shall not be denied, for by his words he has impressed me even more strongly that he is innocent of this awful crime."

The butler was directed to wheel Mr. Kassinger into the room where the body lay, and the officers were told to follow with the prisoner.

The body was lying on a table, awaiting further the care of the undertaker who had charge of it, and when the cover was drawn away from the dead face the prisoner broke down, weeping aloud.

He pressed kiss after kiss upon the cold, white forehead, finally turning away with a heavy moan.

"I would have laid down my life for her, willingly," he declared sadly. "I am innocent of her blood. May God bring the truth to light, placing the crime where it rightfully belongs."

He was taken away then, and the solemn hush once more fell over that sorrowing household. One man remained behind when all the others had gone, and this one was John Gale, the lawyer. He desired a talk with Mr. Kassinger, privately, and making known his request to the butler, was taken up to the invalid gentleman's private room.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DOUBTS ALL REMOVED.

JOHN GALE found the invalid gentleman and his daughter together in the room, the daughter seated upon a stool at her father's feet, fondling his hand, as was her habit.

"You will, I am sure, sir, pardon the impertinence of a stranger, under the circumstances," the lawyer spoke. "I heard you declare your belief in the innocence of Mr. Gerredson and as that is my own belief, too, I desire to have a talk with you about the matter."

"What is your object?" Mr. Kassinger inquired.

"To solve the mystery, if it lies in my power to do it," was the answer.

"You are, then, a detective?"

"No, a lawyer, but my intention is to assume the role of detective in this instance, in the interest of justice."

"We are only too glad to welcome your service, sir, I am sure, spoke up the daughter. "If Mr. Gerredson is innocent, he must be cleared. But, the proof is most damaging."

"I must admit it is," the lawyer agreed, and he said it seriously enough. "But there are some points which stand out boldly in his favor, nevertheless. In my own mind I am satisfied that William Gerredson is as innocent of the crime as am I myself."

"How came you to be interested in the case?" asked Mr. Kassinger.

"That can be briefly told, sir. Will Gerredson and I were class-mates and chums at school. I had not seen him since we left school until to-day. I came from the West yesterday, went to call on him this morning, and then heard of his arrest for this terrible crime. Immediately I decided to set to work in his behalf, for I was sure he must be innocent, and am more than ready to try to prove it."

"I noticed that he started quickly, when he heard your name at the inquest, and that for a second his face lighted up," observed Theresa.

"Yes, for my coming was a surprise to him. Poor fellow! There is proof enough

to hang him a dozen times over, but in spite of it all I feel sure of his entire innocence. His big heart is as true and tender as a woman's; I was not his constant companion four years without learning his true character. I am ready to stake my life that William Gerredson never committed the crime with which he is charged, and I am going to establish his innocence if I can."

"God speed you in the task!" spoke Mr. Kassinger, fervently.

"But, how will it be possible to overthrow the terrible circumstantial evidence that stands arrayed against him?" asked Theresa.

"Impossible to say, at this time," the lawyer answered.

"You say some points stand out boldly in his favor."

"Yes, that is true."

"Will you mention them, sir?"

"There is no reason why I should not do so, here among ourselves. It will be well to keep it secret, however."

"Have no fears on that score, sir," assured Mr. Kassinger. "My daughter and I are only too eager to have the mystery cleared up, and whatever you say will never be breathed aloud."

"Well, here are the points: Supposing him guilty, he has done more than any one else to fasten the crime upon himself. The most asinine piece of folly of all was the leaving of the dagger in the body. Then, his being unable to explain how the blood came upon his coat. A guilty man would have invented some excuse for that, no matter how flimsy."

"Good points, truly," agreed Mr. Kassinger. "I had not thought of them."

"Supposing him guilty, mind you," said the young lawyer, "which I do not for one moment believe."

"We understand that, of course," spoke Theresa. "Supposing him guilty, are not these very points you mention even more conclusive proof of his guilt? If he did the deed it must have been in a moment of extreme passion."

"Unless Will Gerredson has changed wonderfully since I knew him intimately, he was not the person to be thrown into a state of passion so extreme as this would indicate. That he was angry, however, and that he and your sister quarreled, is not to be questioned; he admits it."

"Like you, sir, I am only supposing him guilty. God knows I would not open my lips like this to any one who was not his friend. But, supposing he did give way to an almost insane rage, and do the deed, is it not likely that he would be so horrified at what he had done that he would go away as quickly as possible and never think about the dagger?"

"That is plausible, I must admit, supposing for the moment that it may have been as you suggest."

The lawyer had fixed his gaze upon the floor, and his brows contracted as he bent his mind to the study of the new point that had been raised.

"It looks dark, terribly dark," he mused aloud. "Still, I will not believe him guilty until I hear him confess it with his own lips. He has declared his innocence, and I believe him."

"Of course, sir," Theresa hastened to add, "we only hope you can prove him innocent; but, if he did do the deed, he must suffer for it. While we welcome your aid in the task of solving the mystery, you must not allow your friendship for the prisoner to stand in the way of justice."

"It shall not."

"What my daughter has said I can approve," said Mr. Kassinger. "This awful crime must be avenged, no matter where the blow falls. I can easily imagine, sir, that if you become convinced that Gerredson did do the deed, you will drop the case and leave him to his fate."

"I certainly would not work to bring him to his death. If it comes to that, the prosecution will have no need for any assistance from me. But, as I said, only a confession from his own lips will convince me of his guilt, for, even as it stands at present, the proof against him could not well be darker or more damning than it is. I almost tremble at the task before me."

"Of course you intend to visit him."

"At the earliest possible moment. I have

hope that he can tell me something that will start me upon the right track."

"It is hardly likely, or he would have mentioned it at the inquest, one would naturally think. But, as papa has said, God speed you in what you have undertaken. If he is innocent, he must be saved."

"Now, is there any one else upon whom suspicion can rest?"

"There is no one, sir," answered the invalid father. "I have thought well on that point."

"We know the proof against Gerredson is so overwhelming that it is likely to cast into complete obscurity some minor circumstance that might lead us to the truth of the mystery, could it be brought to light."

"Like papa, I can think of nothing that will direct suspicion to any one but him," affirmed Theresa. "As you say, the awful proofs throw everything else into the shade so far that it is almost impossible to look beyond them. Who would have dreamed that an arrest could have followed so quickly the discovery of the crime, and least of all the arrest of him?"

There was further talk among the three, but nothing new was brought out, and finally the lawyer took his leave.

"Papa, what do you think of that man?" asked Theresa, when he had gone.

"I think he is an honest man, my child, one who is thoroughly in earnest in the work he is undertaking."

"Which I hope he is."

"Then you doubt him?"

"I hardly know, papa. One thing, I think he will let his friendship stand in the way of justice, if opportunity offers."

"He can hardly do anything to defeat justice, my child. Whatever he does he will have to do openly, and unless other evidence is produced to counterbalance these terrible proofs, Gerredson is doomed."

"And the proofs are not all in, either, papa."

"What do you mean, Theresa?"

"I have found something that is still more damaging to Gerredson."

"What have you found? Tell me what it is," eagerly. "Where did you discover it? Why did you not produce it at the inquest? It was no time for holding anything back, Theresa."

"I did not find it till after the inquest, papa. It is a scrap of paper, and I found it in Beatrice's waste-paper bag. The thought came to me to look and see what might be there, and I found this almost immediately. It is a note she must have started to write."

"But, what is it?—what is it?"

She had taken a wrinkled half-sheet of paper from her pocket as she spoke.

"It is addressed to John Awstain, and it supports the testimony he gave at the inquest which that man wanted to bar out. Read it for yourself."

Mr. Kassinger had put on his glasses, and was holding out his hand to receive the paper. He took it, and in eager and trembling haste read it. It was worded thus:

"DEAR JOHN:—

"You must be on your guard against W. G. He is getting desperate. He has even gone so far as to threaten my life if I do not give you up for him. Be very careful and very watchful for yourself; I do not think he would harm me. He is coming—"

There the writing broke off abruptly, and that was all.

"This is terrible evidence," admitted Mr. Kassinger. "There seems to be no doubt whatever of his guilt; now. The jury will render a verdict against him without leaving the court-room. This is Beatrice's writing, any one who knew her hand can swear to that. It is damning evidence—alas for it!"

"The hand of Providence seems to be in it," said the girl, devoutly. "That man would have closed Mr. Awstain's lips regarding what Beatrice had told him, and no doubt it will be barred out at the trial, but here is the same thing in writing, and no one can dispute it. While it is terrible to say so, papa, I now feel sure Gerredson is guilty."

"And this would seem to show that the crime was premeditated."

"The dagger certainly is proof enough that he came here prepared to do the deed."

"Then why, in the name of heavens, did

he leave the dagger where he did, to direct suspicion against himself immediately?"

"Who can say? Maybe some noise startled him, and he had to make his escape in all haste immediately after striking the blow. No doubt he will explain all when he confesses."

"He must be guilty; there can no longer be any doubt. I wish you had shown this paper when that young man was here; it would have set him right without further trouble. William Gerredson a murderer—is it possible?—can it be possible? Great Heavens! it is a terrible thought!"

CHAPTER IX.

FRIEND TO FRIEND.

FROM the Kassinger residence John Gale went direct to the prison where the accused man had been lodged.

Those familiar about the place could tell at a glance that he was a stranger there, but they could not help recognizing, too, that he was a pretty cool and self-possessed one.

This latter was made still more clear when he stepped up and addressed one of the officials of the place.

"I want to see your latest prisoner, unless you have one later than William Gerredson."

His demand was as cool and easy as his appearance and manner.

"Who are you?" was asked.

"John Gale, lawyer. I am going to defend Gerredson when his case comes to trial."

"Oh! If that is the case, we'll let you in, of course. You are a stranger, Mr. Gale; don't think you have ever been here before. Where do you swing your shingle, if I may ask?"

"You'll find it dangling in Kearney street, San Francisco."

As he spoke, the young lawyer produced a card and handed it to the prison official.

"Ha! So, you are from away out there, are you? No wonder I didn't recognize you at sight. Personal friend to the prisoner, I take it, then, seeing you are here so prompt after the verdict. Seems like a pretty clear case against him, from all accounts."

"Seems that way, yes, at present. Yes, I'm a friend, and if there's a chance to prove him innocent I'm going to do it. I'm going to make a fight for him, anyhow, I promise you."

"That's right; the friend in need's the friend indeed. Here's your pass; go right in, Mr. Gale."

The young lawyer had met the official half-way in his free and friendly manner of drawing him out, which Gale had seen through plainly enough, and had made an easy task for him.

Taking the pass, he turned away and was soon conducted to the cell in which Gerredson was incarcerated.

The prisoner was sitting on his bed, his head held between his hands, but he looked up as the coming footsteps stopped at his door, and at sight of Gale, sprung to his feet.

As soon as the door was opened, the two clasped hands warmly.

"I'm glad to see you, old boy, but sorry to find you in such a deuced fix as this," Gale greeted.

"And so am I glad to see you, John," the prisoner returned. "It was a big surprise to me when I heard your familiar voice at the inquest. I knew you'd come here as soon as you could."

They sat down for a talk.

"Well, now for the business in hand," said the lawyer, in a businesslike way, when they had made a hasty exchange of experiences since they had last seen each other. "You say you are innocent of this crime."

"As innocent as you are, John."

"And you swear it—to me, your old-time friend?"

"I do, and most solemnly. I have told only the truth. I'm innocent."

"That settles it, and I believe you. Now, the next thing is to prove it to the world."

"And it looks as though that is not going to be an easy thing to do, John. See how quickly the coroner's jury decided that I was guilty."

"You must help me to prove it for you."

I'm going to play the detective in your behalf, and you must give me the clew. I have had a little experience in this line."

"Would that I could place the clue in your hands—the clue to the murderer, I mean."

"That is what you must do, Will."

"It is what I can't do."

"Have you no suspicion how that dagger came to be missing out of your room, as you told at the inquest?"

"Not the slightest, except that it must have been taken by somebody at some time when I was absent. But by whom I cannot say—can't even suspect."

"Have you been able to guess yet how the blood came to be on your coat? If you could only explain that point satisfactorily, it would go a long way in your favor, you know."

"It's rather late now, John. Anything I might say now would be considered a clever invention, you see."

"I know it; but, if you could only guess the truth—"

"But I can't. I have racked my brain trying to solve that part of the mystery, but all in vain."

"Well, now, see here: Have you any foe who might want to place you in just such a fix as this? Would not that fellow Awstin be capable of doing such a thing?"

"He is my only foe, far as I know, but I do not think he is bad enough to do a deed like this. If he wanted to kill, why did he not kill me? No, I am not willing to believe it of him."

"Why not?"

"Well, he loved Beatrice."

"And may have killed her to cheat your love."

"Cut off his nose to spite my face, eh? I don't believe it."

"You put it in a strange way; but, you know the man and I'll accept your opinion. Who, then, did kill the lady?"

"I have not the slightest suspicion, John. It is the most profound mystery I ever heard of. It has dazed me, almost. I can hardly realize the terrible position I am in."

"And it is just as bad as it can be, Will. You are as good as executed, unless we can put this crime where it belongs. You can look for no help from the police, for they have done their duty in arresting you, and will look no further. It only remains for the prosecutor to convict you."

"I know it."

"You can, though, employ a private detective."

"Do you suppose one would take hold of the case with any heart in it, with everything against me as it is?"

"Are you willing to trust your case in my hands, Will?"

"More than willing, John. You are my friend, you believe me innocent, and I can trust you."

"I have not forgotten the time you saved my life at school, Will, and now is my chance to repay the debt perhaps. I'll save you if it lies in my power to do it. I'll devote my every energy to the work."

The prisoner grasped the right hand of his friend in both his own, and pressed it fervently, saying:

"John, God bless you! You are the only friend upon whom I can rely in this time of danger and trial. I gladly accept what you offer, and once more I swear to you by all I hold sacred that I am an innocent man."

"I believe it, Will. Nothing but your own confession to the contrary can change my belief, and that I know you can never make. I may fail in what I undertake; I dare not promise anything; but I do promise that I will devote all my energies to the work before me."

Another pressure of hands sealed the agreement.

"I have one favor to ask, now, Will," the Lawyer Detective went on to say.

"And you have only to ask it, as you ought to know. What is it?"

"I want to lodge in your rooms."

"You shall. Here are my keys—No, the warden has them; forgot that for the moment. No matter, I will give you an order for them, and will write you a letter of introduction to the family."

"That will fix it. It may not amount to anything, my lodging there, but I'll try it

anyhow. I want to get on track of that stolen dagger, if possible."

"If you can only do that it may lead to something."

"The one terribly bad thing was this blood on your coat. Only for that it might be easier to clear you."

"But, the blood was there, and you must discover how it came there. That is the point upon which the whole matter will hinge, I am certain. Have you seen Mr. Kassinger?"

"Yes, and his daughter, too. They hate to believe you guilty, but the terrible proofs confront them like mountains."

"Yes, yes, I am guilty in the sight of all, I know."

Their conversation lasted an hour or longer, but try as he would the Lawyer Detective could get hold of no point upon which to begin his task.

It was evident enough that Gerredson knew absolutely nothing about the crime, that was evident enough to his friend, and Gale had no more to work upon than he had when he came.

Finally he was ready to take his leave.

"But, the keys—the letter of introduction?" he suddenly recollects. "We had forgotten them, Will."

"That's true. Have you paper and pencil with you? If not—"

"Yes, here are both."

The prisoner wrote first an order to the warden for the delivery of his keys to his friend, and then a letter of introduction to his landlady, a Mrs. Carvingham, of whom he said:

"She has been wealthy, but is now a widow and in reduced circumstances. She has a charming daughter, by the way, John. They will receive you well when they know you are my friend—that is—But, my God! I forget that I am now branded a murderer!"

The prisoner covered his face with his hands, bowing his head in silent anguish.

"Another thing, Will," said the friend in need: "Can you name any true and tried friends in whom I can place confidence, in your behalf, if need be?"

"Impossible to tell," was the sad response. "When a fellow gets in a fix of this kind, friends are generally few. I'll wait and see how many remain true, before I name any."

"Very well; I will not press you on that point now. And now, keep up your courage till I see you again."

And so they parted, and the Lawyer Detective presently left the prison.

One thing the prisoner had not told him, and that was about the visit of the mysterious woman on the previous night, and her leaving poison in his hands. Why he had not disclosed that, he could not have explained; but, thinking it well over, he had decided to keep it to himself for the time being. Perhaps he would tell Gale about it on the occasion of his next visit to his cell.

CHAPTER X.

THE DETECTIVE LAWYER'S TASK BEGUN.

"Now for it," the Lawyer Detective said to himself, as he walked away from the prison. "In possession of Will's room and keys, I may be able to get hold of some clue that will bring the truth to light. John Gale, you have a task to try your skill."

First going to his hotel for his personal effects, he proceeded thence to the good-looking house on the quiet street where Mrs. Melina Carvingham kept a few select and very exclusive lodgers.

Mrs. Carvingham was one of those unfortunate ladies who, by the untimely decease of her husband, had become suddenly reduced in circumstances. A lady by birth, it was a heavy blow, for when her husband's affairs were straightened out she had little left save her house.

There was but one course open to her, that she could see, and that was to take lodgers. This, naturally, was a crusher to her pride, but she made her house so very exclusive that the force of the fall was mitigated to a certain degree.

She had but one child, Julia by name, then only a little girl, but now a young lady in her twenty-second year, pretty and accomplished.

When the Lawyer Detective rung the bell, the door was opened by a capped and aproned maid.

"I desire to see Mrs. Carvingham," he made known.

"What name, please?" the maid inquired.

Gale had no cards, save a few of his home business cards, so he presented one of these, and waited in the hall while the girl delivered it.

The maid soon returned and admitted him into the reception-room, saying her mistress would shortly favor him with her presence.

In a little time she put in her appearance.

She was very dignified.

She found the caller standing, awaiting her, and glancing at the card in her hand, she queried:

"Mr. John Gale?"

The Lawyer Detective bowed acknowledgment, responding in suitable words, and succeeded in making a good impression upon the lady at the start.

"Pray be seated, sir," she invited. "As you are a stranger to me, I presume your call is in the nature of business—since you have made known your profession by your card."

"I bring a letter of introduction to you, madam, which kindly allow me to present."

He rose and extended the letter with a bow.

Mrs. Carvingham adjusted her glasses, and taking the sheet from its unsealed envelope, read it.

"From Mr. Gerredson!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, madam. I am his friend, who have undertaken the task of proving his innocence of the crime of which he stands accused."

"Is it possible? Why, he desires me to surrender his room to you, sir, freely and fully, to occupy and to hold the same as though you were he himself. This is a strange request, truly."

"He has left it for me to explain more fully, madam. He and I were college chums, and almost like brothers. He desires me to take charge of his effects, keeping his room until his fate is decided one way or the other. As a lawyer, I have charge of his case."

"Has he given you his keys, sir?"

"As you see, madam; not only the keys to his room and the street door, but to his trunks and drawers as well."

"That is all I can ask. If he has trusted you thus far, there is no reason why I should not trust you. The room is at your service, Mr. Gale. Poor Mr. Gerredson, he is in a terrible position."

"What do you think about it, Mrs. Carvingham?"

"Why, sir, one is forced to think him guilty in spite of one's self, though I would never have thought it of him."

"I am one who does not think him guilty, madam; on the contrary, I believe confidently in his entire innocence. I am glad to hear you say you would never have thought it of him."

"But the terrible proofs, Mr. Gale; how—"

"It is useless to question at present, Mrs. Carvingham. The proofs are indeed most damning, but I hope to overthrow them, somehow."

"I only hope you can do so, sir, for, since you have spoken so confidently, I am encouraged to hope. It seems so impossible that such a gentleman as Mr. Gerredson could be guilty of so terrible a deed."

"He is innocent, madam, be sure of it. And now, if you please, I will take possession of the room."

"Yes, certainly. I will go up with you myself, Mr. Gale."

She rose and led the way into the hall, where she stopped with one hand on the newel while Gale took up his grip, when he preceded her to the floor above.

At the head of the flight he stepped aside to allow the woman to lead the way, which she did, conducting him to the door of a front room, taking hold of the knob to open the door and walk straight in.

The door, however, to her evident surprise, was fastened, and she came up against it with not a little force.

The Lawyer Detective, close behind her, was at the door about as soon as was she, and he distinctly heard some one moving hastily within, with the unmistakable rattle and rustle of papers.

"Why, some one is in here!" Mrs. Carvingham exclaimed immediately, under her breath. "Who can it be, I wonder? Who

is in this room?" aloud. "Open this door immediately. Sarah, is it you? Open the door right away. By what right have you bolted it?"

"It is not Sarah, but I, mamma," a sweet voice answered. "I was just putting things in perfect order, that was all—"

She opened the door while speaking, and at sight of a stranger, stopped short in what she was saying, the blood mounting to her face, and she was abashed and confused.

The Lawyer Detective saw Mrs. Carvingham give her a keen, searching look.

"But, why did you bolt the door?" the mother asked.

"Why, you know how abrupt Sarah is, mamma, and I merely slipped the little bolt against her. I was just done when you came."

This she said easily and smilingly, and with a cold apology for a courtesy to the stranger, was about to go away when Mrs. Carvingham detained her further, saying:

"One moment, Julia. Let me introduce Mr. Gale, Mr. Gerredson's friend and lawyer, who is going to occupy this room in the absence of Mr. Gerredson. Mr. Gale, this is my daughter."

The introduction was briefly but suitably acknowledged, and the young lady went away immediately afterward, apparently even more confused than she had been at being discovered in the room at first. The Lawyer Detective asked himself what it all meant.

"This is the room, Mr. Gale," the woman went on to say. "Everything is just as Mr. Gerredson left it, except that it has been set in order, as you see. I give it over to you as he has requested."

"Thank you," Gale said, setting down his grip. "If I am a little irregular in my comings and goings, think nothing of that, madam. The task I have undertaken is one calculated to demand all my time and attention, and I shall probably be in and out at all hours."

"I can understand that, sir. Mr. Gerredson's introduction is sufficient guarantee for your conduct, and that is the important thing. My house, as he must have informed you, is exclusive, very."

"Yes, I understand all about that, Mrs. Carvingham. It is just such as I would seek as a matter of choice. You need have no apprehension."

So he bowed her out politely, and closed and bolted the door when she had taken her leave.

"Now, what means this?" he demanded of himself as he looked around the room with searching scrutiny. "What was that young lady doing in here? What were the papers I heard her handling?"

The room seemed to be in perfect order, and was, and no papers were anywhere to be seen.

Crossing the floor, the Lawyer Detective took another survey from the opposite side, and immediately an exclamation rose to his lips.

"This is not like Will Gerredson," he said to himself. "His bump of order was big at school, and he had a place for everything and everything in its place. No paper was ever seen protruding from his trunk like this."

There were two trunks, placed along the wall behind the door, and from under the lid of one the corner of a sheet of paper was sticking.

Gale stepped forward immediately and tried the lid to see if it was locked.

It was not locked, but opened to his easy effort.

There was disclosed a lot of letters and papers, all in disorder, as though they had been taken up in haste and thrown into the trunk.

"This explains it," the Lawyer Detective said. "I see it all now. She has been going through this trunk, as they say, and was probably seated here in front of it with these papers in her lap. When the door was tried she sprung up and dumped them back into the trunk with haste and closed down the lid. She had not the time to try to lock it again. What was she after?"

He scratched his head in a thoughtful way.

"I'll investigate this thing a little myself," he decided. "I'll take a look at these papers, and if she had not found what she

was after when she was interrupted, I may find it."

Drawing up a chair he sat down before the trunk and began to examine the letters and papers one by one.

"Some of my own letters among others," he observed, as he came across them. "A great fellow for preserving letters and papers. I'll bet he hasn't made a burning in five years. So much the better, for right here I may get on the track of the mystery of the murder."

As he continued his investigation, he was busy in thought trying to conceive why the young woman had been in that room—rather what she had been searching for among these papers.

It was easy to trace just how far her investigation had progressed, for the letters and papers themselves revealed whether they had been opened or not. Those she had not yet touched were still pressed flat and firm; the others were more loose and bulky.

Gale was a close observer, and it was his business to be a close observer now, if ever. He noticed that only such letters as appeared to be in a female hand had the appearance of having been opened and read; others had merely been glanced at. It was easy to note the difference, as hinted or explained, in the preceding paragraph. And with this discovery came a new thought.

He believed the girl loved Gerredson, and that a spirit of jealousy had been at the bottom of her stooping to the business of reading his letters. There was something deeper than that, however, as he was yet to find. And when at length he discovered a letter written to Gerredson by herself, a sudden revelation of a new motive for the dark crime broke upon him. Was it possible that this fair young woman had done the deed?

CHAPTER XI.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

In the mean time, as soon as Mrs. Carvingham had left the room, she had sought her daughter.

"Julia," she demanded, "what in the world were you doing in that room with the door locked? I was never so mortified in all my life!"

"Why, mamma, did I not tell you what I was doing there?" was the bold counter-question. "I was putting things in perfect order, for no telling who would come to see that room."

"And some one did come, at a very unexpected time for you, my child, and one upon a far different errand from that of the many reporters who have been bothering us lately. I demand to know what you were doing there, for I distinctly heard papers rattle."

"You heard papers?"

"Positively."

"Well, I cannot explain, mamma. But, say, do you think this Mr. Gale a proper person?"

"He brought a letter from Mr. Gerredson, and has all his keys, so there can be no doubt concerning his right to take charge of the room, that I can see."

"The thought has come to me that he might be one of those dreadful detectives who had come merely to prowl around and learn all he could. But you say he has all of Mr. Gerredson's keys?"

"Yes."

"Then he will discover—"

"Discover what? What are you talking about, Julia?"

"I must go to that room and have a plain talk with this man immediately, mamma. I must—"

"You shall do nothing of the kind, I assure you. A pretty manner for you to compromise yourself, truly! But, I demand to know what all this means."

"I cannot tell you, mamma, I cannot tell you; forgive me, but I positively cannot tell you. I must see this man, I must confess to him what I cannot tell you—at any rate not now—"

"Merciful goodness! Julia Carvingham, have you taken leave of your senses? You would make a confession to this stranger which you cannot make to your own mother? What am I to think of you, anyhow? You shall tell me what all this mystery is, and that at once."

"I cannot tell you, mamma—I positively will not tell you, so do not press me."

"Then you certainly shall not see this man."

"I tell you I must!"

"You shall not! What is more, I'll dismiss him from the house immediately, and so put him out of your reach. A pretty pass! that my daughter would confess something to an utter stranger that she dare not tell her mother; a pretty pass, truly!"

"But, mamma, you do not—you cannot understand; and—"

"Of course I do not understand; how can I?"

"And I dare not tell you. Oh! I wish I were dead!"

She sunk back in her chair, covering her face with her hands, and the mother could only stare at her.

"You say he is Mr. Gerredson's friend?" the girl presently demanded. "You say he is going to try to prove him innocent of this terrible crime with which he is charged?"

"Yes, so I said," stiffly.

"Then you must not dismiss him from the house. Rather, let us lend him all the aid we can."

"Julia Carvingham! I believe that something I have been suspecting for some time is true—that you love William Gerredson!"

"Mamma, I do!"

"And you a Carvingham! There is all the more reason why I should demand to know why you were in that room, and what you were doing."

"And all the more reason why I should not tell you, mamma. It is a secret I desire to keep all to myself, and it is for that reason I desire to see this man to make a strange request of him."

"Julia Carvingham! Are you not aware that you may be running yourself into danger?"

"Danger?"

"Yes. You admit that you love Gerredson, and if that's so you were the rival of this young woman who has been murdered. What if some circumstance should bring the crime around to you?"

The girl was upon her feet in an instant, pale as death.

"That is impossible," she gasped. "You do not think such a thing possible, do you, mamma?"

Mrs. Carvingham gave a shrug of the shoulders.

"How can I tell," she answered, "when you will not confide in me?"

"But, no, it is impossible," the girl said more calmly. "No one could for a moment suspect me of such a crime as that— Ugh! the thought makes me shiver! No, no; that's horribly impossible."

"If she was your rival, though, you could wish her out of your way."

"But, stop and think: Would I put the crime upon the man I love? That is hardly in keeping."

"But, you must tell me what this secret is, Julia. We can never be the same to each other until you have done so. I fear it must be something shocking. Had Mr. Gerredson sought your love? It is certain he never came to me about the matter. Can it be that you are married to him—"

"Would he still have continued to pay attention to Miss Kassinger, if that were so? He is an honorable man, mother."

"Impossible for me to say what would or would not have been done, when things so very extraordinary are coming to light in my own house and concerning my own child. And you a Carvingham!"

"I must see this man, mamma; I must have a talk with him. Maybe I can start him upon the right track in the work he has begun."

"You?"

"Yes, I!"

"What do you know?"

"Nothing; but I must see the man—I will see him!"

She started to the door, but Mrs. Carvingham sprung forward and intercepted her.

"Julia!" she exclaimed, in low excited tone. "Think what you are doing! Do not compromise yourself! Whatever was between you and Gerredson, this man can know nothing about it—"

"But he will know, and so will all the world, unless I can prevail upon him not to expose me. Mamma, let me pass!"

The young woman was determined, while

her mother was pale, trembling in her excitement.

"And you a Carvingham!" she gasped.

"A Carvingham!"

"Exactly; and not without a little of the

family pride, I hope," the girl retorted rather sharply.

"Which, it seems, you would drag through the mud. To think that child of mine would ever keep a secret from me! And you a Carvingham! A Carvingham! A *Carvingham!* I am more than shocked."

The girl left her mother and went straight to the room which had been taken by Gerredson's friend.

She tapped at the door just a few moments after Gale had made his discovery.

"One moment," he said, and silently replaced the letters and papers in the trunk and closed the lid.

Then he opened the door.

He was not greatly surprised when he saw who it was.

"I desire to have a few moments' talk with you, sir," the girl made known. "I believe you are Mr. Gerredson's friend."

"May I invite you to come in?" Gale asked. "Yes, I am Gerredson's friend, I can assure you of that. Not only so, but a friend to his friends, as well."

As he said this, he looked the girl squarely in the eyes, and she was not in any way slow to take in his meaning. She understood him; perhaps Gerredson had told him.

"Yes, I will step in a moment, sir," she said, "for I have a confession to make to you."

"A confession? to me?"

"Yes," falling on her knees. "When you came upon me so suddenly, I was in the act of searching through one of Mr. Gerredson's trunks—I confess it with shame, relying upon you to keep my secret."

"I know all about it, Miss Carvingham," Gale declared. "Get up. I have found what you were looking for, and here it is," placing a letter in her hands. "I can understand the motive you had, and can hardly blame you for the risks you were taking in order to carry it out."

"How can I thank you, sir?"

"By trusting me fully, and by confiding in me."

"That I will do. I now know you are the true friend of Mr. Gerredson, and, as you said, a friend to his friends as well."

"I did not make that statement idly, Miss Carvingham. We have both reason to put forth every effort to save him from the fate that threatens him. Now, can you be of service to me?"

"If I can, sir, I will, believe me. You know that I would die for him, if it came to that. If you want an ally, and I can be of use to you, I'll go to any length. All I ask is, that you will withhold my secret from my mother for the present. I will tell her all in due time."

"It is a bargain. Open the door and call to your mother, that she may hear some questions I wish to ask you. Be not alarmed; the secret is safe."

They had been speaking in low tones, and now Julia opened the door as the detective had requested.

There stood Mrs. Carvingham, having followed her daughter to the room.

John Gale smiled. He had suspected she was there.

"And you a Carvingham!"

So exclaimed her daughter, playfully, smiling in spite of herself, and unable to resist the temptation to repeat her mother's favorite expression.

"Mrs. Carvingham, come in," the Lawyer Detective invited. "This matter may as well be explained now as any time, for I cannot afford to stand in a false light at this time."

Julia looked at him in alarm, and the mother asked what he meant.

"You had better tell your mother all about it, Miss Carvingham," Gale said, then. "I understand the reason why you did not want to do so; you dreaded her scorn; but now I think you will be able to bear it, for it probably will not be very severe, all things considered."

Mrs. Carvingham flushed, the daughter smiled, and all three sat down and a clean breast was made of the whole matter.

The Lawyer Detective had managed it well, and in Julia Carvingham had found a

devoted ally, one whom he could trust and upon whom he could rely in any matter where devotion to William Gerredson and his cause was the chief concern. Or—so he believed, at that interview.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT HAVE WE HERE?

"So, you see," Gale summed up, after a conversation of some length upon the point, "there is every reason why we should work together to the best of our ability to establish Gerredson's innocence and set him free."

"Yes, if he is innocent," said Mrs. Carvingham. "If guilty, he ought to get what he deserves. And anyhow, his name will always bear the scar."

"Not in the sight of any fair-minded person, mamma."

"He is innocent, be sure of it," declared Gale. "I would be willing to stake my life upon that."

"So would I!" Julia avowed, as firmly.

"Well, I hope he is, that is all," said Mrs. Carvingham. "But, Julia, you must take care not to compromise your good name in this affair. Remember, you are none the less a Carvingham."

"I can never forget that, mamma; you would not let me if I would. But, have no fear; it was to save my good name that I was so eager to see Mr. Gale and make my humble and shameful confession to him. There is no danger further, I am sure. Do not fear for that."

"And now, let us give this case a little study," the Lawyer Detective changed the subject. "I suppose you both remember the small dagger Gerredson used to keep here on the mantel, do you not?"

"Quite well," answered Mrs. Carvingham.

"Can you say how long it has been missing from its place?"

"It must be several weeks, at the least, now," said Julia, thoughtfully. "I missed it one day when dusting the mantel, assisting Sarah."

One point in support of Gerredson's story, anyhow.

"You said nothing about it?"

"No; I supposed Mr. Gerredson had put it away, and thought no more about it. I do not think it ever entered my mind again at all."

"Gerredson claims it was stolen from his room."

"Indeed?"

"Do you imagine that any of your servants would be guilty of such a thing, Mrs. Carvingham?"

"Oh, no!"

"If it was taken, of course some one took it."

"But, I cannot think so evil of any one in my house, Mr. Gale; I really cannot think so."

"Then we must look outside of the household, for I accept Mr. Gerredson's statement about the matter as strictly true."

"You have great confidence in him."

"As I have reason to have, Mrs. Carvingham. We are like brothers to each other—or used to be. Were he guilty, I believe he would own it to me rather than see me waste time in trying to prove otherwise. He swears he is innocent, and I have no choice but to believe him implicitly."

"And such confidence almost inspires me with the same; but the proofs, the terrible proofs!"

"There is only one way of explaining them, Mrs. Carvingham."

"And how is that?"

"The wretch who killed Beatrice Kassinger, had premeditated the crime, and had it all planned to lay the crime upon Gerredson."

"Good heavens!"

It had been said firmly and convincingly, and Mrs. Carvingham's face paled as her eyes met the steady gaze of the detective, a fact he was quick to note and which set him thinking.

Was it possible *this* woman could know anything about the crime?

Had his shot struck home?

It was certain, believing Gerredson innocent, that his dagger had been taken out of

his room in this house by some person, and where, so easily, could blood have been put on his coat without his knowledge?"

The mystery was a dense one, and Gale was groping for light in any and every direction. It mattered not to him where the crime fell, so long as he could put it where it belonged and clear his friend. That was the work he had undertaken to do; that was the task he must accomplish.

"Do you think that can be true?" Mrs. Carvingham gasped, after her excited exclamation.

"Can you see it in any other light, madam, holding Gerredson to be innocent?" the young lawyer demanded.

"Well, no; or at any rate that looks reasonable; but, is it possible that the awful deed had been in contemplation ever since that dagger was first missing from this room? It is a horrible thought!"

"It must be so. We must search out the person who took that dagger, and that brings us back to the point we were about to consider; that is, to look outside of the household to find the person who took the weapon from this room. How are we going to get at the truth?"

"I only wish that I could suggest the way," the woman earnestly declared.

"But you can not."

"No."

"Well, let us see: Had Gerredson many visitors?"

"Not a great many, sir. A friend dropped in occasionally to spend the evening with him."

"What friend was that?"

"I refer to his friends generally. It was sometimes one, sometimes another. He had not many, and they were apparently gentlemen, every one."

"No need to tell me that; I never knew Will to keep the company of any others. Had he any *lady* callers at any time?"

"Never, sir."

"You forget Miss Kassinger herself, mamma," reminded Julia.

"But she was only here once, Julia, you know, and that was when Mr. Gerredson was sick."

"When was that?" the Lawyer Detective asked.

"It was about six weeks ago, I think, sir."

"She called to see him, knowing he was sick, then?"

"Yes; but he was not in. It was his first day out of the house."

"Had he been sick long?"

"Several days. He had La Grippe."

"She did not come up to his room, then?"

"Yes; she had brought some flowers, and requested leave to place them in his room with her own hands."

Gale was thoughtful.

"And you ought to have seen how angry Julia was," remarked Mrs. Carvingham, thoughtlessly. "But for me she would have thrown the flowers away, I do believe. I ought to have guessed the truth then."

"What need to mention that, mamma?" the girl demanded, impetuously.

"And why not, since you have told Mr. Gale everything? I remember the look you gave the lady, as though you would like to tear her hair for her, and it is a wonder I was so blind as not to guess your secret, you artful miss. I know I could not be so blind again."

The detective was watching both as they talked, and he noted that the girl grew decidedly pale.

"Mamma, you had better control your tongue," she said, forcibly. "Were it not that Mr. Gale is now my friend, and understands me, he might suspect that I had killed Miss Kassinger."

"Merey on me!"

"Isn't it so, Mr. Gale?" the girl boldly appealed. "The one who killed Miss Kassinger must certainly have hated her, and mamma is doing her best to make it out that I hated her."

"My goodness! Julia! how can you speak of such a thing?" the alarmed mother cried.

"You know very well I have no such thought in mind."

"Of course I know that, mamma."

"A person cannot be too careful about weighing words, at a time like this," the detective observed. "Were it not for one thing,

there might be room for suspicion against your daughter, Mrs. Carvingham."

"What is the one thing you speak of, then? I am glad to know what I have said cannot be taken against my child."

"The fact that all the suspicion has fallen upon Gerredson. You, Miss Carvingham, would have taken the best of care that it should fall as far away from him as possible, I can well believe."

"Be assured of that, were I capable of doing such a deed."

"Well, you say, then, this young lady came up to this room and left the flowers. Was she here long?"

"Only a few minutes."

"Was she in the room alone?"

"Only while I stepped down to get a jar in which to put the flowers she had brought. She wanted to leave them in water, you understand."

"I see. And she went away immediately."

"Yes."

"Well, was that dagger missing before that visit, or afterward?"

"Really, I cannot say; can you, Julia? It was missed by you, first, I think. Do you remember?"

"It was after her visit, mamma."

"How soon after?" Gale asked.

"I would not attempt to say, sir. I think it was the next week when I helped Sarah with her dusting."

"And you think that perhaps Miss Kassinger had taken it?"

"Why, no; why should I? I simply noted that it was gone, and thought no more about it."

"Do you think she did take it?"

"It is just possible that she may have done so."

"Did you see it on the mantel the day she was here, Mrs. Carvingham?" turning to the mother.

"I did not notice its presence or absence either, sir. It may have been there or it may not; I cannot say. Do you suspect her of having taken it?"

"A detective must be suspicious of everybody and everything, madam, and that is the role I am playing now. She may have taken it. But, if so, with what object in view?"

"Suicide?" suggested Julia.

"No, positively. It was not suicide. If she had wanted to die, would she have taken such pains to obtain a certain weapon with which to take her life? I cannot believe it. We have, I imagine, about reached the end of our tether, and nothing more is to be brought out. We shall have to look further and probe deeper."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FUNERAL AND AFTER.

THE funeral of the murdered young woman, on the following day, was largely attended.

Friends and flowers were abundant, for the Kassinger sisters had been dearly liked by a large circle of acquaintances.

Many were the words of sympathy offered to Theresa; and she needed them all, for she appeared to feel her great loss most keenly. It would have been strange had she not.

The family connections were all present, and the number, on the Kassinger side of the house, was large.

On the other side they were few indeed.

Mrs. Kassinger, now dead, had been an Englishwoman, Terwilliger by name, and her only relations in this country were a brother and a niece—the latter a child of a deceased sister.

These two have already been made known to the reader. They were Gower Terwilliger and Mildred Daniels.

They were present, too, but not in company.

Mildred was with Theresa, the cousins having always been favorites with each other—more so than had Mildred with Beatrice.

The body was laid to rest in Greenwood, in the same plot where, only a few short weeks before, Philip Kassinger, brother to Leonard and uncle to the murdered girl, had been buried.

His grave was still new and fresh-looking, and now leaving another beside it, the family

turned away with heavy and sorrowing hearts indeed.

Leonard Kassinger took it very hard, but Theresa and Mildred did all in their power to comfort him.

The young lawyer was on hand, his keen eyes taking in everything.

When it was over he went to the Tombs to see Gerredson.

He had not been there since the occasion of his first visit, and Gerredson was greatly cheered by a sight of his face.

"I have just come from the funeral," Gale said, after first greetings.

"Poor Beatrice!" sighed the prisoner.

"She has a cousin, I learn."

"You mean Mildred Daniels? Yes, and a very fine girl, too, she is."

"She was present at the funeral, with her uncle. He looks like a British bulldog."

"And he is, with an apology to dogs in general. If you had likened him to the porcine species you would have done better."

"He looks it all. What do you know about him?"

"Little that is to his credit."

"Then he is a rascal, I take it."

"He is all of that. It is hinted that he has so mismanaged his dead sister's affairs that the business is about all his instead of being Mildred's."

"There is little love between them, then, I imagine. I noticed she did not go near him or speak to him. She seemed very devoted to Theresa."

"You imagine about right. She understands him. Yes, she and Theresa were always good friends and companions."

"There's a question I want to ask, Will: Did you miss that dagger before or after Beatrice put the flowers in your room after your sickness?"

"I see you are a detective in earnest. But, of course, you got this from Mrs. Carvingham or Julia. It was some days after."

"Did you see the dagger at all after that visit?"

"Impossible for me to say."

"Then I am bailed on that point. I wanted to know whether it was possible that Beatrice herself could have taken it."

"Not to be thought of. What object could she have in taking it?"

"I don't know. You don't imagine Julia Carvingham can be the one who killed her, I suppose?"

The prisoner smiled sadly.

"I understand what you are coming at," Gerredson answered. "I let you have all my keys so that you might the more fully satisfy yourself that I am the same Will you used to know. It was an open invitation for you to search through my trunks and drawers."

"So I knew it to be; but that's only one side of the matter: When I took your room yesterday I was just in time to catch Julia Carvingham in the act of overhauling your trunks."

"The deuce!"

"She was in search of a certain letter."

"Well, I'll forgive her. I can hardly blame her for not wanting that read by other eyes than mine."

"I came upon her too soon, however, and when she had gone I carried on her search and found it, and so learned her secret."

"Ha!"

"Yes; and when she came back again shortly to confess to me, I understood the matter. She is going to be my ally on the case. But you see there was reason why she should hate Beatrice."

"She did not love her, that is sure, but that she would kill her—Oh! that was impossible. Besides, would she have used that weapon? Would she have allowed suspicion to fall upon me? No; you will have to look further, John—But, I know you do not suspect her."

"True, I do not; but another might, not knowing what we know."

"I have something to tell you which I withheld when you were here before, my friend. I had a mysterious visitor the first night I was here."

"Tell me about it."

"It was a woman. I awoke to find her in my cell. She had a cloak over her head so I could not recognize her, and spoke in a hoarse, strained whisper. She gave me poison, telling me to take it and escape the

shame of being killed for the murder. She said I must be guilty, of course."

"Ah-ha! here is something to build on, if we can only get on track of that woman."

"But, how are you going to do it?"

"Have you no suspicion who it was?"

"Not the slightest. She was going before I had my eyes opened, almost, and was gone before I knew it."

"How did she get in?"

"I do not know. The jailer came along soon after she went out, and I spoke to him, but it seemed that he had not seen her, and I did not tell him the particulars. I tried to let him infer I had been dreaming, thinking it as well to keep the matter to myself for a time, if he really did not know anything about it."

"What is the poison?"

"A powder in a bit of white paper."

"You have no use for it?"

"No."

"You would not take it, even if it came to the worst?"

"Positively not. I am innocent, and suicide would brand me guilty. I'll see it through to the end."

"Then let me have the powder and I'll put it in the hands of the police and let them hunt the matter up, if they can do it."

"Will it not hinder your own work, when you make it known that a woman has been here? She will hear of it, and that will make her keep closer than she might otherwise."

"You may be right, but I must at least speak to the head official here about it. We must know how she got in. She might come again with a dose of murder instead of suicide. You said she actually entered your cell?"

"Yes. I might be deceived in thinking it a dream, were it not for the poison, which is real enough. Here it is."

The tiny packet was delivered to the Lawyer Detective.

"That's so; it was no dream. Some one did visit you, and we must put forth every effort to learn who that woman was. The fact that she entered your cell points to assistance from some employee of the prison. I'll see the head of the institution at once and see what he can tell me."

Other points were talked about, more or less at length, and Gale took his departure.

He stopped to talk with his friend the prison official.

"There's a loose screw about your establishment, sir, that needs your attention," he informed.

"Why, what's that?" the official asked.

"Poison was delivered to my client the night before last, sir, and there must be a traitor in your camp."

"Ha! that accounts for it! One of our under keepers is missing, and this explains his sudden departure. He is the rascal who was bribed to take it to him."

"It was worse than that. He admitted a woman into the cell, and her errand might have been murder just as well as mercy—to call it that. The fellow must be caught and made to tell what he knows."

"I'll put the police after him at once. He asked to step out that night, on some excuse or other, and he never stepped in again. He has been bribed, and it may be that this fellow Gerredson is innocent after all and this woman knows it, the reason she came here."

"Her words wouldn't go to indicate that, however."

Gale gave the circumstances in full, enjoining upon the official the necessity of working upon the matter quietly in order that no suspicion might be aroused.

"I knew there was something back of it all," the official declared. "We'll have that fellow if the police of New York are any good at all, and when we get him I will let you know."

From the prison the Lawyer Detective went to the Kassinger residence for the purpose of making the acquaintance of Miss Daniels.

He was not disappointed, for she was still there after returning from the funeral.

"I'm glad you have dropped in, sir," said Mr. Kassinger. "It is no use for you to look further for the murderer of my child. The police have made no mistake."

Of course Gale was eager to know what new thing had been discovered, and the scrap of writing that had been found in the waste-

paper bag was shown to him, and for a moment he was staggered.

His faith in his friend, however, rose up permost, though he did not there declare it, but finally took his leave as though this latest development had discouraged him in his task. On reaching his room he was nonplused indeed, for there was a letter that had come for him during his absence—one which gave him food for reflection.

The letter was city-post-marked, but whether in a woman's hand or a man's the detective could not decide. It was a scrawl at best, with a heavy stub pen, evidently, but was correctly spelled and worded. It was as follows:

"JOHN GALE, LAWYER—

"You are on dangerous ground. The man is guilty and I know it. You had better drop quietly out and go away. Take this as a gentle warning. The house you are in is full of danger for you. Your false friend is willing to let you take all manner of risks with the hope that you can save him. He is playing with you. Common sense ought to tell you he is guilty. Drop the matter at once.

"OBSERVING FRIEND."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRIAL AND FOLLOWING

EVENTS were so shaped that William Gerredson was given a speedy trial.

And that trial, like the inquest, came out just as everybody had expected—a verdict of guilty and a sentence of death.

It could not have been otherwise, in the face of the evidence presented. No sane jury could have doubted for a moment. It was so plain a case, as the prosecution made it out.

But, then, it needed no "making out," it stood forth in its own strength, unaided and alone. In spite of his sincere and solemn declaration of his innocence, the prisoner was looked upon as an artful hypocrite. His past counted for nothing; at last the mask had been torn away.

No need to dwell upon the particulars. The circumstantial evidence lacked no link to make it complete. And being complete, its ends were brought together and welded by the scrap of paper which had been found by Theresa Kassinger in her sister's bag for waste-paper, in support of which the further testimony of John Awstin was admitted in full.

The motive for the deed?

Well, murders are sometimes committed for very trifling reasons. The motive in this instance was of that nature. That only served to make the crime the more terrible and black.

It was shown that William Gerredson had loved Beatrice Kassinger madly, and seeing himself supplanted by Awstin, he resolved upon killing her rather than allow her to become his rival's bride. To have killed Awstin would have been useless; her love lost to him, he must kill her.

The prisoner had not been defended by John Gale alone.

Gale had employed one of the ablest criminal lawyers of the city, taking only a secondary part in the case himself.

He had felt his deficiency in knowledge of the State statutes, fresh from California as he was, though in San Francisco he ranked high as a criminal lawyer himself; and was determined that his friend should have the best help to be had.

Every speck and flaw was fastened upon, and when the case closed the defense gave notice of their intention to appeal. This would mean delay, and that was the one thing important. Time was needed for the young Lawyer Detective to test his skill in establishing the innocence in which he so firmly believed.

Even his associate in the case declared it useless to look further; that the prisoner must be the murderer.

When, however, Gale had told him everything he knew about the life and character of Gerredson, then he admitted that possibly he might be innocent; but, in that case, who was the guilty one? What could be the double motive—the murder and the putting of the guilt upon him—Gerredson?

The Lawyer Detective could not answer; that was the task he had before him—to find out.

Immediately after the trial Gale visited his friend in his cell.

"Do you give it up, now, John?" the prisoner asked.

"Not by a mighty sight!" was the emphatic answer. "I am now going to get down to business, and I'll show to the world that circumstantial evidence is not to be relied on."

"God help you in the work. If you have hope you have more than I dare lay claim to, now. I feel that effort will be useless, and that I am doomed, but still I declare to you now as I did at first, John, that I am innocent, entirely innocent, of that frightful deed."

"Did I not believe you I would not try to serve you, for it was as dastardly a crime as I ever heard of."

And so they parted, the one to work and the other to wait.

The Lawyer Detective went home at once, to study the case in the quiet of his own room.

Arriving there, however, he found a caller awaiting him, one who was to open up to his mind's eye a new vista of ideas in the same connection.

It was Mildred Daniels!

He had met her before and been introduced to her, as we have seen.

"Well," she remarked, after their greeting, "the trial is over, and an innocent man is doomed to death."

"How can you call him innocent now?" Gale asked.

"I hope you have not turned against him, sir!" in a tone of much alarm.

"What is the use of trying to do anything more?" the Lawyer Detective insisted, to draw her out.

"I came to you, sir, hoping I should find you more determined than ever to establish the innocence of your friend. Say you have not given up."

"Had I anything to build upon I certainly would not give up."

"Maybe I can help you."

"What do you know? You call Mr. Gerredson an innocent man in spite of all you have seen and heard."

"I know nothing, Mr. Gale, but I suspect much. I am more than half afraid I have been holding back the very thing that was needed in the prisoner's defense."

"And what is that?"

"It is possible that I can point out the murderer."

"Ha! now you claim my interest. Let me hear what it is you have to tell, Miss Daniels, and I will weigh it well."

"You know who I am, of course—that is, my relation to the family of the murdered young lady."

"You are cousin to the twin sisters."

"That is it. Their mother and my mother were sisters. My uncle and guardian is the only living one of that family."

"Gower Terwilliger?"

"Yes. Does it seem possible to you that he can be the one who killed poor Beatrice?"

"It certainly does not, with nothing upon which to build but the suspicion you would evidently throw upon him. Why do you suspect him?"

"I do not suspect him; that would be too terrible, bad as I know him to be; but, at the same time I cannot close my eyes to certain facts that connect him with the matter."

"Let me have them, please."

"To do so I must tell you other things, briefly. Otherwise you cannot see it in the same light."

"Certainly; tell me everything as fully as possible."

"In the first place, then, there is a certain small property at stake which, in the event of the death of one of the twin sisters, would come to me. It is small, but it would be very acceptable to one in straitened circumstances. Gower Terwilliger has misappropriated the fortune my mother left to me, so that today I am penniless."

"Ha!"

"And he, himself, which serves him right for his rascality, is little better off. Most of his business has gone wrong for months past, and he is in tight circumstances. This little sum which now comes to me by the

death of Beatrice Kassinger, and which for two years to come he will have the handling of, might serve to tide him over. Now, is it possible that he killed her for that?"

"Hardly. He would not dare take the risk."

"You do not know Gower Terwilliger, sir. He is dogged enough to undertake any desperate thing. Still, I do draw the line in his favor at murder; I merely tell you these facts because I feel they ought to be known."

"Then, too, why would he place the crime at Gerredson's door?" the detective asked.

"I have not yet told you all, sir. Terrible as it is to think such a thing possible, it has preyed upon my mind till I can bear the secret no longer. There is a reason why Mr. Gerredson should be removed, for he stands in the way of that man's ambition in another direction. What I am coming at now, sir, involves a confession from me which costs a great effort to make known. I hope you will not needlessly betray my confidence and allow me to be held up to ridicule."

"I promise you."

"Well, it is this, simply: I love William Gerredson, and my uncle-guardian is eager to force me to marry another person—"

"Whom?" the detective interrupted.

"Mr. Theodore Peyterson, who is engaged to my cousin Theresa."

"How can he hope to bring that about, when the man is already engaged to another lady?"

"He says he only needs my consent, as he has Peyterson in his power and can bring him to terms whenever he will. He knows I love Gerredson, and so is aware it is he who stands in his way."

"And it is because you love Gerredson that you are willing to have the suspicion cast upon your uncle?"

"Yes, and because I hate my uncle. Not only that but I want matters stirred up so that other things may be made to appear. If my uncle has Peyterson in his power, I fear my cousin is making a false step in marrying him."

"It grows complicated, that is true, Miss Daniels."

"What can you do, then, sir?"

"I can only act upon the knowledge you have given me, and learn whether it is possible this uncle can be the guilty one. Have you ever heard him speak in a threatening way about Gerredson?"

"Yes, I have. On the very night of the crime I had a quarrel with him, and he said he would see to it that Gerredson was removed—or words meaning the same thing."

"But, you hesitate about thinking he killed your cousin."

"Yes; bad as he is, I am not willing to charge him with that terrible crime. What I have told you are facts; I dare not follow them out to the worst and make such a terrible charge."

"Nor will I, yet. It hardly looks reasonable. I cannot see how a man in his right mind could kill so young and handsome a lady so deliberately. Still, a murderer does not stop to draw any differences of this sort, and his crime is horrible enough in any case."

"How, then, do you look at it, sir?"

"I have made up my mind that the slayer of your cousin had the crime in mind for a considerable time, and had everything arranged for the time and manner of its execution. Another thing, how would this uncle get hold of a dagger belonging to Gerredson son?"

The young woman was thoughtful.

"I cannot tell you," she slowly answered. "Still, he may have taken such measures as would place it in his hands."

"You are determined not to spare him if you can possibly make out a case against him, I can see."

"I had rather see him in prison than Mr. Gerredson."

"Would you know his writing were you to see it, do you think?"

"Yes, I think I would, sir."

"Is this it?"

As he put the question he presented to her gaze the note of warning he had received.

"If it is not," was the calm reply, "it is a very close imitation of it, sir. Where did you get this? But, I see it has been sent to you here. Did you desire me to read it?"

CHAPTER XV.

GALE IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

WITH permission to read it, the young woman did so.

"That sounds like him, too!" she cried. "I would not say he did write it, however, mind you."

"Certainly not; I understand. You simply say the writing *looks* like his, and that the tone of the missive sounds about like the manner of the man. I understand."

"That is it."

"Well, do you want to have him arrested at once?"

The girl gave a start.

"I only placed these facts in your hands, sir, so that you could weigh them, and act upon them as you thought best."

"But, you would not care if the suspicion was transferred from Gerredson to your uncle, even though both may be innocent of the crime. Your love for the one and hate of the other makes it natural."

"You speak the truth; I cannot deny it."

"What if suspicion should turn upon *yourself*?"

"Good heavens!" growing pale to the lips. "You are only joking!"

"But, look the matter squarely in the face, Miss Daniels. You love the man who loved your cousin, and hence she was your rival."

"And you insinuate that I would kill her?"

"Not at all; but, there would be a motive."

"But, how could I get that dagger? And would I, of all persons, turn the suspicion upon Mr. Gerredson?"

"Then you have thought of it all before?"

"Not till you spoke about it. It never entered my head that I could be suspected."

"Nor are you likely to be, either. I certainly do not suspect you. Can you, however, throw suspicion upon any one besides your uncle?"

"I cannot. And regarding him I have told only bare truths. If he is the guilty wretch, let him suffer. If not, then of course he must not be charged. You are going to be very sure before you move, of course."

"Naturally. Another question: What do you know about that fellow, Awstin?"

"Little or nothing. It has been a wonder to me, though, what Beatrice could see in him that she should turn Will Gerredson away for him. I take him to be a man of very low breeding."

"My own impression, exactly, Miss Daniels. Was there any interest at stake in this fellow's favor, if he could dispose of both your cousin and her lover at one blow, do you think?"

"None whatever, so far as I can see."

"Would you think him capable of such a deed?"

"I would not; I look upon him as a coward at heart."

"And is not this the work of a coward?"

"I would say not; it is either the deed of an insane person, or one with a grimly determined will."

"There is no insane person whom we can suspect."

"True."

"And that narrows it to the second class you name, and such a man you say this uncle of yours is?"

"The description fits him well."

"You have told me all you can?"

"I think I have."

"Then I am greatly obliged to you. Keep your own counsel, and say nothing to another soul about it. I will give attention to the matter from this new point of view, and we'll see what will come of it."

Some further conversation, of no moment, and the young lady took her leave.

Gale went into a brown study.

Could it be possible that this man was the murderer? That was the leading question in his mind. He decided not.

He had seen the man more than once, now, and while he had set him down as a hard man, he drew the line at murder. That he would do anything for the sake of gain he did not doubt—anything but that.

Gower Terwilliger was a hard-headed man, and he would never take such terrible risks.

Still, here was room for suspicion and it would not do to let it pass without giving it the raking into it deserved.

It was nearly night before Gale came out of his profound studying of the situation in all its bearings, and he had to acknowledge that he was little better off.

Time after time had he made the circuit of all the evidence in the case, on every hand, and each time it had all come around to the one place, and there stopped, with the accusing index pointing straight at—William Gerredson.

"If he did do the deed, he was insane at the time, and does not know it now," was his final decision on that point. "But, if I thought that possible I would give it up just where I am; and as I do not give it up, *ergo*, I do not think it possible. No; my friend is innocent!"

When he went out he went in disguise, to a certain extent, and intended paying a visit to Mr. Terwilliger.

As he neared the place of his destination, however, he saw that gentleman come out of the house and start off down the street ahead of him.

"This pleases me just as well," he said to himself. "I may be able to fall in with him casually, and make his acquaintance as a stranger entirely. I'll follow him, anyhow."

For a man of his build, Terwilliger was a lively walker, and one who seemed tireless.

Block after block was laid behind, and still he kept on.

Nor did he once pause till he had made his way thus for fully a mile and a half, and was well down on the Bowery.

Here he entered an English alehouse, so-called, and took a seat at one of the tables.

Gale waited some minutes, then entered after him.

He had located him, and sauntering along, dropped upon an inviting chair at the same table.

He saw that Terwilliger surveyed him with something of a scowl, but paid no attention to that, ordering for himself a glass of a light beverage.

There was a stage in the place, and a performance was going on all the time, of one sort and another. Terwilliger was facing this, while Gale had his back toward it.

The Lawyer Detective was quick to note that this had little attraction for the Englishman. He scarcely looked at the stage, and frowned when the crowd in the place applauded anything that was said or done.

He glanced at his watch, too, in an impatient way, and Gale drew his conclusions.

He believed the man was looking for some one; that he had, no doubt, come there to keep an appointment with some person.

If so, it were better that he should not engage him in conversation, or try to—for it was not likely that he would make much of a success of it, anyhow, but wait for developments.

So deciding, he turned his chair nearly around, rested his back against the table, and pretended to be absorbed in the performance.

A mirror at an angle just ahead of him enabled him to see Terwilliger and others in line.

He had not long to wait for something to turn up.

He was using care, whenever he allowed his eyes to turn upon the mirror, for fear Terwilliger might discover and suspect his trick.

Once when he looked he saw another face that was familiar to him, and at the sight he almost gave vent to an ejaculation that rose to his lips. It was the face of John Awstin!

The young man, looking more at home here than anywhere the Lawyer Detective had yet seen him, was clearly looking for some one, and as his eyes fell upon the form of Gower Terwilliger, his face lighted up and he came forward to where he sat, clapping his hand on his back in a familiar way.

"Been waiting long?" he demanded, cheerily.

"Long enough, young man, long enough," was the surly response.

"Well, that's your fault, then, for I see I'm right on time," with a glance at his watch.

"What would you expect to be, behind time? Sit down, now, and have something, and we'll talk matters over."

This had been said in low tone, but Gale

heard everything, and was well pleased with the arrangement; and something calling for applause just then, he gave it with a will, to prove that all his interest was centered on the stage.

Putting his hat back upon his head, he leaned yet more comfortably against the table, and was evidently absorbed in interest—and so he was, of another sort than was suspected.

"Well, it fizzled," he heard Awstin say.

"Yes, and worse luck—or maybe better, if we can make it work another way, and that's what I wanted to see you about."

"What do you mean?"

"I want you to marry the other one, now. That never looked possible before, and I did not spend any thought upon it; but now it has got to be."

"Whew! Theresa Kassinger will never have me, old fellow; no use figuring on that."

"I'm not so sure she won't. That remains to be seen."

"You expect me, then, to enter rival to Peyterson the same as I did to Gerredson?"

"Exactly, and you can do it as well as not. There may be a chance for you, for I have other things laid out for Mr. Peyterson."

"But, it's so soon after the death of Beatrice, you know; and, too, she is already engaged to Peyterson, and I hear the wedding is not going to be postponed on account of the death."

"I'll take care of Peyterson, or try to, at any rate. All I want you to do is to show yourself his rival."

"And maybe get a knife plunged into me for it—"

"That is what you must look out for. That is your part of the business. If you can only marry this one, then your fortune will be immense, and so much the more I will reap for aiding you. See?"

"I'd like to see it, I can assure you of that."

"Then no reason why you shouldn't. Go in to win, and I'll help you, and between us we are sure to win the day. If Peyterson had no money I'd see the whole thing clear as it stands, for I could probably make terms with him; but as he has a fortune, too, I must lay plans to draw interest on that as well. I am not asleep, young man, and not afraid to show my hand, either."

CHAPTER XVI.

MORE MYSTERY STILL.

LITTLE need to say that John Gale was interested in what he heard.

Here, again, opened another view in the great case upon which he had ventured in the behalf of his friend.

Came now with renewed force the suspicion which Mildred Daniels had cast upon this rascally uncle of hers, newer and greater reasons why he might be the guilty one who had done the deed.

There was wealth at stake; he evidently had the man Peyterson and this other rascal in his power to a certain extent, and bringing about the marriages in the manner he desired, his own pay for his trouble in the matter was assured. It was certainly a big scheme.

On the one hand he sought to realize upon marrying off his *protegee* to advantage; on the other, by selecting the right man for his other niece.

Gale congratulated himself on happening to be in the right place at the right time.

He was interested particularly in one remark that had been let fall, that made by Awstin regarding the possibility of getting knifed at the hands of Peyterson if he became his rival.

There had been no particular stress laid upon the pronoun; if there had been he would have felt sure of his ground, almost. One thing he did suspect, that these rascals knew who had killed Beatrice Kassinger, even if they were not indeed the very pair who had done the deed.

But, there was more to be heard.

"It's all very pretty, as you plan it, old man," said Awstin, thoughtfully, "but there is a mighty big doubt whether it is going to work that way. I don't believe Theresa Kassinger will notice me, much less listen to my suit."

"You must make her notice you too."

can cause just as much trouble there as you did in the other case, if you make up your mind to it. You can arouse the spirit or jealousy in Peyton, at least, and that is one of the main points to be accomplisheds you know."

"By George, I wouldn't want to cause as much trouble as there was in the other case, old fellow. I wouldn't want to see Theresa murdered in cold blood."

"Nor are you likely to. You were not the cause of that, you know."

"No, I don't know. I made Gerredson madly jealous, and this was what came of it."

"If he wanted to kill the girl, you could not help that, could you? You had no way of knowing what crazy thing he would do, had you?"

"That case is a warning for the one you propose now, however. I tell you we are on dangerous footing all around, old man. If there should be another murder, or anything like it, we might get into trouble."

"Nonsense! How could we? We had nothing to do with the other case, and we certainly have no thought or intention in that line. That was an accident, as it were; something no one would have thought of. If you are going to scare out you are of no use to me."

"I'm not scared out yet, though, old hoss. I'm only telling you how impossible it looks to me. There was a good deal of difference between those girls. Theresa is a good deal more reserved than Beatrice was, and mighty careful of her company. She never took any more notice of me than politeness demanded of her, and it isn't likely I will find much favor now."

"Well, a fortune depends on your trying, and I want to know what you mean to do about it."

"I'll give it a try, of course."

"All right; that's all I want you to do. Your first work is to get Peyton out of the field if you can, and after that we must find means for carrying it further. The whole matter is just here: You have got to marry Theresa Kassinger, and that ward of mine shall marry Peyton."

"I'm willing enough, far as I am concerned. You will have no trouble with me. But, have you any plan thought of by which I can work the thing?"

"If a New York sport of your brass hasn't ideas of his own, he had better close up shop."

"Which is the same as saying you haven't. Well, I'll give it a try, as I said, and will get there if I can. Suppose that ends our business, don't it?"

"Yes, that is all, for this time. I will put in a good word for you there, and at the same time will do all I can to assist in ousting Peyton; but in that I have to be careful, since Mildred and Theresa are good friends, and one will tell the other everything. It is not an easy thing to accomplish, but it must be done in one way or another."

"By the way, Mr. Terwilliger," the younger man asked, "what is your honest opinion about that murder? Do you really think Gerredson did it?"

"As I wasn't there, and didn't see it, I can't swear that he did," was the answer. "It looks like a pretty plain case against him, though, and I have to agree with the jury."

The elder man now rose and buttoned his coat, and with a few commonplace remarks, in a louder tone, they parted.

Their talk had been carried on in a tone only a little above a whisper, and they could have no idea the man on the other side of the table had heard a word of it, for Gale had acted his part well to make them feel the more secure.

He had applauded occasionally with the crowd, when it was impossible to hear anything anyhow, and so had given the impression that all his attention was centered upon what he witnessed on the stage.

Terwilliger went out, but young Awstin remained where he was, sipping his ale and taking his ease.

The Lawyer Detective, however, glancing at him by aid of the mirror, saw that he was looking around the room as though in search of some particular person.

Having made up his mind to give further attention to the young man, Gale kept his

seat, and waited to see what further would take place. Perhaps another interesting interview was on the tapis.

Never had he made a closer guess; that was what was coming.

A little time after Terwilliger had gone out another man approached the table, quietly sitting down beside Awstin.

He was a rough-looking, thick-set fellow with a grim, determined visage, and looked as though he might prove an ugly customer to deal with if occasion gave him favorable opportunity.

As Gale looked at them in the glass, he fancied there was some resemblance between the two.

"Well, here I am," the new-comer observed, quietly.

"So I see," was the response. "What do you want to see me for?"

"Who was that bloated aristocrat ye had with ye when I first came in?" the rough fellow demanded.

"That's Gower Terwilliger, uncle to the girl I told you about, the one that was murdered, you know. He wants me to try my hand at winning the other one, now."

"That's right, if there's stuff in it. That's all we're here for, to get all the stuff we can. And that's what I wanted to see ye for, to talk about that family."

"The Kassingers?"

"Exactly. Maybe I have stumbled upon something that will put ballast into both our pockets."

"What do you mean, dad? Have you got hold of something regarding the mystery of that murder?"

Hal! they were, then, father and son!

"What do you mean?" the new-comer demanded. "Don't mean to tell me they have got the wrong man in jail, do ye?"

"That's my honest belief, though it don't make a great deal of difference to me whether they have or not. But, what is this tale you have to unfold? It must be important."

"Tell me, son, who was Philip Kassinger?"

"Philip Kassinger? Why, he was a brother to the daddy of these girls."

"When did he die?"

"Some weeks ago; maybe a couple of months now."

"That's him, then; that's the cadaver I'm interested in, my boy. There's wool on the stars this season, sure."

"What do you mean? Don't mean to tell me you have dug up and disposed of the remains of my anticipated bride's uncle, do you? That's a rich old joke, sure. What is it?"

"Nothing of that sort; that wouldn't amount to anything. No, it's deeper than that, you bet. I was present at a resurrection the other night."

"Philip Kassinger dug up?"

"Bull's-eye, first shot. That was it. Was there anything mysterious about his taking off, my son?"

"He died suddenly, but he had been ailing with heart trouble for a long time, so it was set down as a case of heart failure, or something in the same line."

"It was, eh? Well, now, it hits me that it may have been murder."

"You don't mean it!"

"I just do, though, and I've been cutting my throat ever since that night for allowing them fellers to get away without learning who they was."

"What was it? Tell me about it. I am all in the dark yet."

"Well, it was the night before that murder—no, I mean the same night, but the night before the day on which it was discovered. See? You know what kind of night that was; just the time for a cadaver-catch. I was out in Greenwood with that intention, when I ran afoul of three fellows armed for the same sort of work. I dropped my tools and followed 'em. I'll make it short and to the point. They dug up this Philip Kassinger; one fellow ripped out some of his in'ards; they put the body back again; and off they went, taking that somethin' with 'em."

"And you let them get away without following them?"

"That's what I done, son; and, as I said, I've been chewin' my head off ever since it happened."

"I should think you would. There might have been something in that, as you say, but there is no clue for us to work on to find out who they were, or anything about 'em."

"But, I've been studyin' it a good deal since then, boy, and it sums up like this: Somebody has suspected that man was p'izen; that somebody has taken up the body to find out; it must a' been a doctor that opened the body, and it was the stomach he cut out and took away with him."

The conversation was, as before, almost in whispers, but the Lawyer Detective had keen ears, and caught nearly the whole of it.

That it stirred his blood need not be said; it awakened his detective keenness to the full. And none the less did it interest the younger Awstin, who was looking at his worthy parent with eyes open wide with wonder. Yet again had another leaf of the wonderful mystery unfolded, only to hide the more securely what lay below, as it seemed.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NEW THOUGHT PROBED.

SOMETHING calling for applause just then, the Lawyer Detective clapped with the loudest, and it was not possible that the two rascals could think he had been paying the least attention to their talk.

Nevertheless, as soon as the noise subsided the sharp ears of the detective were ready for their further words.

"You must be right, dad," the son agreed with what his father had just said. "But, who do you s'pose it was suspected? And whom did that person suspect? And why? It's worse tangled than ever."

"I allow you are right, boy; and that's just what I wanted to see you about. It is in that family where you have got a foothold, and I thought mebby you could find out somethin' about it if you kept your eyes and ears open, and mebby get hold of the secret and make somebody bleed."

"Yes, I catch on to that, dad; but, who in the world did the deeds? If this other was murder, too, who had an interest in the old man's death?"

"I have a sneaking suspicion that I could name him."

"Who?"

"Gower Terwilliger."

"This big feller you was talking with?"

"Yes. And if he did do it, then we are likely to hear of another death."

"You mean Leonard Kassinger. That's so. That would bring these girls in for all the wealth there is, I s'pose."

"You are right. And maybe it was Leonard that suspected something, and he has hired a doctor to take up the body and make an examination."

This was John Gale's thought, too.

He decided to pay a visit to the Kassinger residence as soon as possible.

"What you want to do, then," Awstin the elder advised, "is to keep your eye on Mr Terwilliger till you get the proof, and then bleed him like old sin. Make him come down handsome."

"You bet I will; but, the trouble will be to get the proof. There's some bad points that stand in the way, and I don't see how to get around 'em. Before anybody else can be put in danger, Gerredson has got to be cleared of the worst points against him."

"What's them?"

"The dagger, and the blood on his coat."

"Might a' been done easy enough. Terwilliger may have had a helper who got the dagger and put the blood on the coat."

"I don't know, and I'm not going to puzzle my head with it anyhow. I'm no detective. Hello! that's another good feature about the matter, from my standpoint, ain't it?"

"What is?"

"Why, as they have got the murderer, no detectives are likely to be prowling around."

"Yes, that's so; but, you are not in for anything that you need fear them, ye know; you are simply looking for a wife— Ha, ha, ha! That is to say, you are looking for a gal with boodle."

"Too bad, dad, that you let those fellows get away. If we only knew that doctor we could somehow find out who it was engaged him, and in that way get at the bottom of the whole matter. I'll have to work it back."

wards now, if I can get at the big end of it to start off with."

"And if you do get a hold onto 'em by it, remember your dad that put it into your hands."

"I won't forget you, old man."

"If you go back on your dad, my boy, I'll strip the fine feathers right off'n ye, and don't you forget it."

"Don't worry about that."

"I'll show myself in sassity, I will, and I'll say, says I—'Here I am, old man Awsttin, the body-yanker; and this is my boy John. Don't he look like his dad?' I'll say, says I. Ha, ha, ha!"

"All right, dad; when I go back on ye you may do just that very thing. But, don't go off and make a show of yourself before you are sure, for no knowing what you might spoil, you see. If you knock me off my pedestal now, it falls on you as hard as on me."

"Don't you worry, either; I know a cadaver from a live bird, every time."

And at that the importance of their conversation flagged, for, so far as the Lawyer Detective was concerned, interest in it ceased.

Glancing at his watch, he noted the time and left the place.

He did not think it worth his while to watch either of these fellows further, at that time.

It was more important, he thought, to interview Mr. Kassinger regarding the death of his brother, to learn whether he knew anything about the fact that the body had been exhumed and the stomach removed.

This was what was supposed to have been done, and the argument to which he had listened was reasonable.

He found Mr. Kassinger in his room, his daughter with him, she sitting in her accustomed place at his feet, stroking his wrinkled and trembling hands.

"You have discovered something new?" the old man inquired.

"No, not so far as clearing my friend is concerned," Gale sadly answered.

"I almost hoped you had—yes, I quite hoped you had," the invalid confessed. "Even yet I cannot bring myself to believe William Gerredson killed my child, in spite of proofs, judge, jury, and everything else."

"And as you have heard me say, sir, nothing short of a confession from his own lips will ever convince me of it," Gale answered. "No; but I have come to have a talk with you concerning other family matters."

"I am willing to talk with you."

"There was another death in the family a short time before that of your daughter."

"Yes; my brother Philip; he died seven weeks ago. They say when death touches a family it does not stop till it has three times tolled the bell. If that holds true, there is still one more to follow."

"Of what did your brother die?" Gale asked.

"Heart disease. He was taken off very suddenly, and yet it was no surprise to us."

"There was no suspicion about the death, I suppose; no thought in the mind of any person that it could possibly have been—well, poison?"

Gale was looking at both father and daughter, and he noted that the latter appeared to give a slight start as he put the question.

"No, positively no," the old man hastened to assure. "Who would think of harming a good old man like Philip?"

"Who would think of harming so fair and young a lady as your charming daughter?"

"That's so, that's so; but, no, it is hardly possible, sir. Why did you ask that?"

"I am leaving no stone unturned, sir. I heard there had been a sudden death, you see."

"Yes, sudden, but a perfectly natural one. I do not think there can be any question about it."

"Was your brother rich?"

"Yes."

"Who would profit much by his death?"

"That was not known till his will came to be read. It was found that he had left about everything to my daughter here."

"And nothing to your other child?"

"A mere nominal sum, sir."

"Why, how was that? But, you were his favorite, I suppose," to Theresa.

"Yes, sir, I was his favorite. He thought

a great deal of me, though really I could not tell you why."

"They were different, greatly different," explained Mr. Kassinger. "Beatrice was very willful, and had a selfish nature. Theresa was the opposite, and was as devoted to her uncle as she is to me."

The girl sat with her eyes cast down.

"Papa, you are unjust to poor Beatrice," she said. "It was not her nature to be very affectionate, but she loved you and uncle dearly, I know. I have heard her say so many a time. It was her nature, the same as it is my nature to be affectionate. I cannot help it."

"Well, well! it was her misfortune, then, for it lost to her an equal share in her uncle's wealth. He positively did not like Beatrice, and there's no getting around it."

"And this wealth coming to your children, who would be the gainer if they were to die?"

"I am not a lawyer, sir, while you are."

"And I am not a New York lawyer, as I learned when it came to the point of defending my friend at the trial. They have a cousin, I believe."

"Yes, Miss Daniels."

"And she has a guardian who is at the same time her uncle, as he is also the uncle of your children, being your wife's brother—"

"Good heavens!"

Mr. Kassinger sat up straight, his eyes dilated and his lips apart.

"What is the matter?" Gale asked.

"It cannot be that you suspect Terwilliger of the crime!"

"How can it be possible that he could have done it?—far be it from me to say he did it, sir."

"As possible for him as for Gerredson, I would say, sir, and with a far better motive. That man is a rascal, as I happen to know, though I had never believed he could be a murderer."

"Then you really begin to suspect him now?"

"No, no; I cannot suspect him; I cannot think it of him. You startled me into the terrible thought for a moment only."

"And then, too," spoke up Theresa, herself pale to the lips, "why would he put the crime upon her lover? In fact, how could he have carried it out so well? Like papa, I cannot think it of him."

"No, no, it's impossible," Mr. Kassinger declared.

"Still, were he guilty, he would desire to put the crime on some one else in order to escape suspicion himself," the Lawyer Detective observed.

He looked from father to daughter, noting well every word, look and manner of each.

Theresa was sitting with her hands clinched, nervously, her manner denoting great excitement within.

"No, no, no," she declared rapidly. "It cannot be—cannot be. It was hard enough to think Mr. Gerredson guilty, but it is a hundred times worse to think it of uncle Gower."

"Well," and the Lawyer Detective now sprung a surprise upon them, "can you tell me who could have a suspicion that Philip Kassinger's death had not been natural?—a suspicion strong enough to lead to the taking up of the body for examination? I happen to know that such has been done."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THEORY AND FACTS.

FATHER and daughter stared at the Lawyer Detective in wonderment undisguised, and then at each other.

The daughter, particularly, seemed to be excited by this disclosure. Her eyes took on a wild, hunted expression, and her lips were parted as though it would have been a relief could she have screamed out.

Gale could not understand her. Had there been grounds for the suspicion, he might have thought it possible she had had a hand in the terrible tragedy that had been enacted. That, however, was not to be thought of. No, it must be laid to her tender heart and sensitive nature.

He had taken care to inquire well concerning her character—that is, her disposition, and it had been pronounced by everybody as simply lovely.

Not a person had he found who could say

one word to her discredit in any way whatever.

The sister, on the other hand, had been less generally well thought of.

"What you have said, sir, simply astounds us," the young lady managed to speak, after a moment or two. "There certainly must be a mistake."

"Yes, most positively," agreed the father. "There was no suspicion that poor Philip did not die a natural death—there could be no suspicion. You must have been imposed on, sir."

"Nothing of the kind. The body has been taken up and the stomach removed for examination."

"But, who in the name of wonder has done it?"

"Was it not done by your orders?"

"No!" the invalid cried, vigorously. "Why should I suspect anything of the kind? Whom would I suspect? No; if it is so, I know nothing about it."

"Mr. Kassinger, there is no reason for me to doubt your word, and there is no reason why you and I should not confide in each other in this strange matter. I have come to you and your daughter frankly."

"Which we appreciate," spoke Theresa.

"It is not likely that any one would have ordered such an investigation without authority to do so."

"True."

"And you and your daughter, sir, are the only ones properly having that right. If it was neither of you, then the great question is: Who did order this examination? Why was it ordered?"

"Perhaps the police," suggested Mr. Kassinger.

"That is so," the daughter quickly supported. "After the death of Beatrice, it may have occurred to them to investigate the sudden death of poor uncle."

"Impossible, for two reasons," opposed the detective. "In the first place, the police have made out their case against Gerredson, and are done. In the next place, this work was done before Beatrice was killed."

"Before?" repeated Theresa, in amaze.

"Yes. The body was taken up on the evening of the same night on which your sister was killed."

"What wonderful mystery is here, anyhow?" mused Mr. Kassinger. "Who is it can be taking this interest in the matter of Philip's death? Why, such a suspicion no one but a lunatic would entertain."

"And yet it does not look like the work of a crazy man, sir."

"But, sir, you have not told us all you know, yet," reminded Theresa, who had now in a measure recovered from her shock of surprise. "How came you in possession of this information?"

"That is something I cannot disclose to you: craving your pardon," was the reply.

"And why not? You are not coming to us as frankly as you declared."

"The information came to me more by accident than otherwise, and to disclose its source would be to expose certain persons."

"One would naturally ask why you have not sought your information of those persons, then. Would you but tell us who they are, papa and I would very soon take the matter in hand."

"To learn what they know?"

"Certainly."

"You would learn but little, for they know nothing themselves, beyond the bare facts I have given you."

"More wonderful than all. Papa, can you comprehend this?"

"I cannot, I cannot. I wonder if there is anything in the suspicion that Philip was poisoned?"

"If there is, somebody has the facts by this time. If not, then that same Somebody has the proof of that. I hoped you could help me to the solving of this part of the great tangle."

"You thought, then, it had been we who had ordered the examination made. We were entirely ignorant of it."

"Which makes the puzzle all the greater. One thing is plain: Some person, I wish I knew who, was not satisfied that Philip Kassinger's death was natural, and if it has been found that it was not, that person might be of great help to me in proving the innocence of my friend; for, if Philip Kassinger was

poisoned, it is safe to assume his murderer and the slayer of your sister were one."

"That looks entirely reasonable. I only hope you can discover the truth of the matter."

"You *must* discover it," urged the feeble invalid. "If my brother was poisoned, I would overturn heaven and earth to bring his slayer to justice."

"Yes, I positively must get at the truth," Gale agreed, "for, if it was so, this will be a long step toward proving the innocence of Will Gerredson. He certainly could have no motive for killing that old man."

"Mystery, mystery ' the invalid sighed.

"There is nothing you can tell me?" Gale asked. "No new suspicion comes to the mind of either of you now? If you could only let fall some word that might put me on the right track—"

"How gladly would we do it!" cried Theresa. "You have done right in coming to us, sir for if we could help you we certainly would. And, should anything turn up that might in any way be of use to you, we will send for you and place the matter in your hands."

"Did I not trust you, I would not have taken you into my confidence as I have done," rejoined Gale. "Our interests, in one respect, are one: we want to see justice done, and only that."

"Exactly."

Their conversation was carried to much greater length, but without bringing out anything of especial interest, and finally Gale took his leave.

He had not been gone from the house ten minutes when there was another caller—one who inquired for Theresa Kassinger.

He was a tall man, and the card he gave the servant bore the name:

HENRY HENRY.

When Miss Kassinger came down, she greeted him as he rose at her coming, having taken the liberty to seat himself while waiting; but she gave no sign of recognition.

"Mr. Henry?" she spoke

"At your service," he responded, bowing. "I advertised as you directed, but you have not seen it, perhaps. I thought I had better call—"

She was looking at him in blankest amazement.

"You have not forgotten?" he questioned, in much surprise.

"I—I am obliged to confess it," she faltered. "You know the terrible excitement—the terrible trouble we have had. I have scarcely been able to think since that awful shock. I fear you will have to remind me—"

The smile that curled the lips of this dark man caused her to stop short, and she stared at him as though in affright.

"If you could only understand how nearly crazed with grief I was," she went on, hurriedly; "if you could only understand what I have suffered, you would not be surprised at anything, sir. I wonder that I am not nearer out of my mind than I am. You cannot know—"

Still he smiled, his cold, gray eyes fastened upon hers, and she felt as if she must choke.

"You forget even your call at my office?" he asked.

"I—I— Let me see; you are—"

"Henry Henry, private detective."

"And I called at your office? When was it? It must have been my sister, I feel sure."

"Your name is Theresa, is it not?"

"Yes."

"That is right. It was Theresa who called, and who placed a serious matter in my hands for investigation. I have come to report my work done."

"I cannot understand—cannot understand," the girl declared, pressing her forehead with her hand. "It must have been my sister, and yet why would she use my identity?"

"That is something impossible for me to guess, Miss Kassinger."

"What was the nature of the business she desired you to undertake for her? I ought to be told that."

"It was a serious matter, and one which ought to be made known. As you deny it was you who came to me, I must talk with Mr. Kassinger."

"No, no—that is, do not trouble poor papa with any more than he is troubled with already. The poor man is almost overcome with his grief. Since dear Beatrice is dead, confide in me."

"She never mentioned a secret matter to you?"

"Nothing of such moment as you would lead me to think this must be."

"Then perhaps I had better keep her secret, since she is now no more, and it can do you no good to know it."

"But, you said it ought to be made known."

"And so it had. I think it better to lay the matter before the police—"

"Good heavens! What can it be, sir? You must tell me! I must—I *will* know what it is!"

"It concerns the death of your uncle."

The girl's fingers clutched the arms of her chair fiercely.

"The death of my uncle!" she gasped. "Why, in what way does it concern him, or his death? You must tell me, sir."

"Well, I will: Your sister had a suspicion that his death had not been natural, and she employed me to have the body taken up, and an examination of the stomach made—"

"My God!"

"And, as I said, my work is done and I have come to report. The examining doctor has found that your uncle came to his death by a powerful dose of poison. Your sister's suspicion, therefore, was well founded. But, now that she is dead, what she knew can never be learned."

CHAPTER XIX.

COULD ANY ONE GUESS?

THE young woman sat and stared at the tall man like one struck dumb.

It was as though she could not understand what had been said to her, much less comprehend the meaning of it.

A chill, too, seemed to pass over her, and she looked cold, so deathly pale she was. The murdered sister, in her coffin, had scarcely looked more deathlike. The news had all but overcome her.

"How horrible!" she hoarsely gasped. "Then it is plain that a double murder was done in this house."

"No doubt about it."

"And did my sister say whom she suspected?"

"She did not. That was her secret. Whatever it was it sleeps with her."

"Can it be possible that her lover did both deeds, do you think, sir? It is very plain that he killed her."

"I am not sure it is so plain, Miss Kassinger."

"Why not?"

"Because here is a far greater motive for the terrible deed. The one who poisoned your uncle may have been discovered by your sister, and in order to keep the secret from being made known that person killed her."

"But, the dagger—the blood—"

"Then you would insist that Gerredson did both deeds?"

"Oh, no, no, I insist upon nothing. I am almost crazed. You are a detective; explain it to me."

"It is hard to explain what cannot be understood, Miss Kassinger."

"Then you confess yourself puzzled?"

"I do. First, why would your sister assume your identity in coming to me? I cannot understand that. Then, if she suspected such a crime, why should she come to me in secret as she did, wanting to keep it so still?"

"What do you think about it? What is your view of it, sir?"

"Just this: that it was not your sister at all, but *you*, who came to my office; and the person you suspected was a close family connection."

The young woman had drawn herself up with dignity, and her eyes flashed.

"Sir!" she exclaimed. "Sir! would you boldly accuse me of falsehood? What grounds have you for saying that?"

"It would have been folly for Beatrice Kassinger to come to me and say she was Theresa; she might know there would be danger of her secret getting out, looking as

much alike as you did. And then, she wanted it kept secret because she thought to protect the guilty one."

"And who was that guilty one?"

"Your sister."

"Merciful heavens! Must I sit here and listen to this? Then tell me, in the name of mercy, who killed her, and why?"

"It was suicide, Miss Kassinger."

"Impossible! It has been so declared; and see the proofs against Gerredson. The very mystery of it almost turns my brain, sir. How can it have been suicide?"

The police will probably find that out, somehow. The matter must be put into their hands, for it is a serious one. The fact that your uncle was poisoned points to Gerredson's innocence."

The young woman was pressing her hands in each other in extreme nervousness of manner.

Her agitation was great, her aspect almost pitiable.

"But, why should Beatrice kill our uncle?" she feebly demanded. "She had nothing to gain. And then why would she commit suicide afterward? Sir, your theories do not hold good. The crime cannot be gotten away from Gerredson, the man who is justly condemned for it."

"Would you not clear him, if you could make it appear that your sister did kill herself?"

"No, unless I was convinced of the truth of it."

"Suppose this matter is given to the police, and they chose to think *you* are the guilty one."

"I!"

"Yes; for, as you know, the law is no respecter of persons. Can you not see that it might fall on you?"

"Explain, oh! explain."

"Well, you killed your uncle, let us suppose; your sister suspected you of the crime; you discovered that she knew it; you put her out of the way for your own protection, and—"

"Sir!"

She had sprung to her feet, and her eyes were blazing.

"Sir! Leave this house, and at once, never to enter it again! I believe you are the rankest kind of impostor! There is no truth in anything you have told me! I am tempted to have you ejected, sir!"

"Harsh measures are not necessary, Miss Kassinger. I will go at your bidding. I think, however, you had better act upon the hint I have let fall, and make every effort to discover whether your sister did not commit suicide. That will clear up the whole matter, you see."

"And have it appear that she poisoned our uncle? Never! No; she was as innocent of that as I am; and if she really did go to your office, as you claim but as I very much doubt, she went with the firm intention of exposing the guilty wretch if her suspicion was found true. He discovered her secret and her intention, and took her life to hide his guilt."

"And took good pains to leave evidence that would bring the crime straight home to himself, eh?—for I understand whom you refer to."

"The hand of Providence."

"Would it be worth anything to have these facts suppressed?"

"There! you have stamped yourself rascal—placed the brand upon your own brow, sir! Go! Go at once! Go, and never darken these doors again!"

She had drawn herself to her full height, and with outstretched arms pointed to the door, her eyes flashing.

"Very well, I go," he said, quietly, "but my going does not by any means bury these stubborn facts which have been brought to light. If you have forgotten where my office is, here is my card; you may have occasion to call upon me again."

"Your impudence is marvelous!" the girl cried, fiercely. "Do not stand upon the order of going, sir, not one second!"

She still pointed, and with a bow he passed out.

He had no sooner gone, however, than she took up the card he had laid on a stand and looked at it closely.

Her face was terrible in its expression as she did this, depicting almost every passion

of evil that can be mentioned. A sleeping tiger in her nature had been aroused.

"Who would have dreamed it?" she said to herself in fierce whisper. "What next will be forthcoming? Of a truth, it is almost enough to drive one to suicide. I wonder," thoughtfully, "if that can have been the secret of Beatrice's death? It is a point to which I must give study."

She did not cast the card down again, but put it in her pocket.

"How am I to understand this matter—how deal with it?" she asked herself, now less excitedly. "This man certainly ought to know it was not I who called at his office; I was paralyzed with amazement when he made the matter known to me. It must have been Beatrice, of course. But, what was her object in using my name? I must frame an excuse for that, somehow."

She thought long and earnestly on that one point alone, and as she grew calm a look of satisfaction came over her face.

"Who was the caller?" her father asked, when she returned to him.

"Poor Beatrice, poor Beatrice!" she sighed, before answering. "It is more terrible than we ever dreamed, papa."

"What is more terrible, my child?"

"This whole matter. The caller was a detective. He comes with what would have been an overwhelming surprise, had not the visit of Mr. Gale in a measure prepared us for it."

"What on earth are you driving at, Theresa?"

"This was the man who dug up the body of Uncle Philip."

"Is it possible?"

"The very truth. And, he was employed by Beatrice to do the work."

"This surpasses all belief, Theresa; it positively cannot be true. Are you sure the man was what he claimed to be?"

"We have the story told by Mr. Gale as proof of it, papa. Beatrice went to his office some time ago and engaged his services, saying she suspected that our uncle had been poisoned; and, strangest of all, she used my name instead of her own."

"What new madness are we to hear?" the invalid exclaimed. "I simply refuse to believe anything of all this, Theresa."

"It is not to be doubted, papa, for it has come to us too straight. I tried all I could to deny it, but it stood in its own strength as the grim truth. Now, why did Beatrice suspect?—and whom?"

"I am bewildered, my child, utterly and entirely bewildered. But what did he say about the poisoning? Has the examination been made?"

"Yes, yes, and that is the worst of all. He says uncle was killed with a large dose of poison—Oh, papa! who can have done so terrible a thing as that? We are not safe a moment!"

The poor invalid, looking like death itself, was trembling like an aspen.

"That I should have lived to come to trouble like this in my old days," he moaned. "Only for you, my daughter, I could wish I were lying beside Philip this moment."

"Sh! papa. We must not give way under our sorrow and trouble, but we must rise and face them and see that justice is meted out to the wretch who brought it upon us. Tell me, papa, do you think it possible that I, your Theresa, could be guilty of so heinous a deed as poisoning uncle—"

"My God! What new madness, my child, what new madness?"

"This man who was here hinted as much, or said it was possible the police might entertain such a suspicion when the facts of the poisoning became known. Oh, I almost wish it had been I instead of Beatrice!"

"The wretch!" Mr. Kassinger cried. "The infernal scamp! To hint at such a possibility as that! Oh, for the use of my limbs, and a chance to deal with just such characters! Do not give the matter a thought, my child, not a single thought. It is ridiculous."

"But, papa, whom did Beatrice suspect? Why did she go to this fellow and use my name? What did she know? Who killed her, if not Gerredson? And if he did kill her, as he must have done, was it he who poisoned uncle? Oh, my poor head is almost turned, trying to untangle the awful mystery of it all. And what were the motives, oh, what were the motives?"

It was useless for them to try to understand it, and at last, with a fond good night kiss, the affectionate daughter left her sorrowing father and retired to her own room, there to be alone with her own soul-harrowing secrets.

Could any one have seen the anguish of her face, after that door closed, it might well have been believed that she was carrying a heavier burden than any one yet dreamed of.

CHAPTER XX.

ANOTHER PHASE PRESENTED.

GOWER TERWILLIGER, on parting with young Awstin at the ending of their interview in the English ale-house—so-called, set forth at once to make a call.

He walked, as before, from choice as it would seem, and reaching the place of his destination he made inquiry for Theodore Peyterson.

That gentleman was found at home, and the thick-necked son of Britain was shown up to his room.

There was no pleasurable greeting between them.

Peyterson opened the door with a scowl on his face, and Terwilliger walked in as though he and not the other was master of the apartment. He helped himself to a seat and made himself quite at home.

"Well?" Peyterson demanded.

"Business, my boy, business," the Englishman briefly explained.

"Then let us have done with it as soon as possible," was the surly invitation. "Your room is better than your company."

"Which shows how much you like me," said Terwilliger, smiling. "That does not trouble me in the least, young man. But, you had better be more civil to me."

"My will is good enough to pitch you down-stairs."

"I don't doubt it, sir, don't doubt it in the least; but, you can't do it, in the first place, and in the next place you dare not try it. I hold the whip hand, my gay boy, a fact you don't want to forget."

"You will not hold it forever. What do you want here?"

"I want to finish that little business talk we had some time ago, that is my errand, young man."

"Then you are determined to push me to the wall, are you? You are not well enough satisfied with the promise I made you, that I would do the right thing after I married the girl?"

"I have a better scheme than that in view, my boy. I want you to marry my other niece, my ward, Mildred Daniels. I have another man picked out for Theresa Kassinger. No use your kicking, now; the thing is all cut and dried, and that's the way it has got to be."

"It has, eh? Maybe I will have a voice in it."

"It will be a very weak and feeble one if you do. Don't let it slip your mind that I hold you in my power."

"You are a confounded old donkey!" cried Peyterson, in a rage. "You don't know when you have got a good thing in hand. Here you would spoil my chances as well as your own."

"I know what I'm doing," Gower declared confidently, partly closing one eye and leer ing at the younger man.

"You may think so, but I'll be hanged if you do. What has Mildred Daniels, that I should marry her? You have made a beggar of her, you old rat, you!"

A thunder-cloud appeared at once on the Englishman's face.

"Have a care what you say," he roared. "If you don't, I'll go out and turn you over to the police this minute, sir! I have lived more years in this world than you have, and I know what I'm doing."

"You haven't lived years enough to learn what a consummate ass you really are, nevertheless. That other girl does not care for me, even did I care for her, and there you would throw me out all around. As it is now, I am *sure* of this one, and you will be sure of a percentage on the profits as soon as I get her."

"You are sly, young man, you are sly, but I see through you. It is going to be my way, I tell you, or not at all. You can make up your mind to it, and if you do not, then to the police you go."

"But, confound it, the girl won't marry me!"

"She won't, hey? We'll see about that!"

"No, she won't; she has a will of her own; you couldn't force her to do it."

"I'll attend to that part of it, never you fear. You be on hand to take her, and she'll marry you fast enough."

"But, what is your object in it?"

"As though you don't understand it! Enough of this, young man. You either come to my terms or I expose you."

"But, I don't understand, Mr. Terwilliger," now with somewhat of anxiety and a good deal of humbling. "You have me all in the dark. I do not know what you are getting at."

"Ha, ha! Don't think to blind me, my boy. You are sharp, but not sharp enough to cope with me. Don't get that mistaken idea into your head. I see through the game you want to play, perfectly well, and you know I do, too. You are only playing a dodge."

"But, I swear I don't—"

"There, there, now, it's not necessary you should swear at all. I understand, and so do you. We'll work the thing my way, or not at all. I know what I'm doing, if you don't. You will marry Mildred, and John Awstin will wed Theresa—"

"Never! Do you hear me? Never! Do you imagine for one moment that I will give way to that pup?"

The young man was white with rage, and his fists were tight clinched. The other looked at him, smiling in a taunting manner.

"No, by heavens!" was added with force. "I'll kill him first!"

"It would not be the first deed of the kind—"

"Silence! or it may not be the second, either! You make me desperate, Gower Terwilliger!"

He leaned forward toward the Englishman, his face assuming a frightful expression.

Murder was plainly stamped upon every line.

"I have not the least doubt of your good intention, sir," Terwilliger said, in a tone of irony. "Take care how you give way to the desire, however. Let me call your attention to the fact that I have a bulldog in my hand."

And so he had; his hand, partly removed from a pocket, showed the handle of a heavy revolver.

"You are determined to spoil everything, I see," Peyterson cried, fretfully. "You stand in your own light, and in mine, too. Here everything is arranged, and the prize is mine, and now you would snatch it from me! By heavens! it shall not be! no matter what the outcome! I won't give way to you."

"You will do just as I direct, sir, and nothing else."

"I swear I will not! I'll show you that you are counting too much upon the secret you hold. Rather than give place to such a man as Awstin, I'll wade in blood. I defy you, curse you! Go to the police with your secret, if you want to. You are only fooling yourself and cheating your own pocket by the course you are taking. It had to come to this sooner or later, anyhow."

"You'll think differently of it, when you have had time to cool off, though," Terwilliger observed, with his same aggravating evenness of tone. "You'll come around all right—"

"No, by heavens! and you'll find it out so, too! I'll—"

"I know, young man. I know all about it. Life is sweet, and disgrace is not a pleasant thing to think about. You'll do as I say, and then all will be as merry as a marriage bell. I know what is for the best—best for myself, of course; and I am going to look out for my interests. And yours will come all right in the end, too. Now, I'll take my leave of you."

"You had better go, by great you had better go! And I never want to see your face again."

"You will, though, none the less. You will not only see me, but hear from me, if you kick over the traces. I am going to rule this matter in my way, or somebody will suffer. That's all. I'll tell you, young man, you will want to see me before long, so I'll just appoint the time now before I go."

Call around day after to-morrow at two. I will be at home."

"Curse your coolness! Go! before I strike you to the floor!"

"No danger of that; don't forget the bulldog. Well, I'm going now, having had my say out. Don't forget the programme and your part in it. It has got to be carried out that way or not at all. Good-evening, Mr. Peyterson."

And with that the elder rascal of the pair opened the door, stepped quickly out, and was gone.

He drew a breath of relief when he got out upon the street, and hastened away.

When the door closed after him, Theodore Peyterson drew a dagger from under his coat and shook it vengefully.

"You have stepped too far this time, curse you!" he hissed between his tight-shut teeth.

"You would step in and balk the richest game I ever won, would you? We'll see!"

He replaced the dagger, and paced the floor in an excited manner.

"So, he would have that fellow Awstin step in and marry Theresa, now that the other is beyond reach, would he? We'll see about that, danger or no danger. But what is his game, I wonder? He insists that I understand it, and that I am playing a trick myself. He is wrong there; I am puzzled."

He thought long and earnestly, and at last his face lighted up suddenly.

"Curse him for the idiot he is!" he cried. "Now, at last, I think I understand him. He thinks I'm rich, and I thought he was the very man who knew better. My clever play has fooled even him. That's it, it must be it. He will force me to marry his beggared ward, thinking to bleed my fortune in that way, and with Awstin in the Kassinger pudding will also have a straw in that barrel. Ha, ha, ha! Not a bad little scheme, if he was only right in his estimate all around."

He laughed heartily as he thought it over further.

"It would be a good joke to let him play it his way, if I had nothing at stake in it myself," he mused. "But, I have, and there's the rub. I must make haste to make sure of my hold. Once I'm married to her, then it isn't likely he will cut up further, since he will be sure of drawing something out of me as interest on the secret he holds. Ha, ha, ha! He thinks he has a rich scheme on hand, when it is only a shadow!"

It amused him, for some time, but gradually he grew sober about it as he allowed his thoughts to run further.

"There are two ways open to me," he told himself. "The first is, to go and set Terwilliger right in his estimate of my fortune; the other, to get Theresa to marry me immediately, upon some good excuse or other. The first is hardly safe; the latter hardly possible. The old idiot might get mad and go and blow out to the girl, and if she, too, has an eye to my money, I might get thrown overboard entirely. Then if I urge her to marry at once, unless I can invent the best of excuses, she may scare off and dismiss me altogether. I'm between two fires, and hang me if I know which way to turn."

It was, all in all, a complex scheme of rascality.

There were still depths that had not been sounded, as well as heights that had not been reached.

And Gower Terwilliger, as he made his way homeward, was in no easy frame of mind, as his mutterings gave evidence. He had grown pale since leaving Peyterson, and was nervous.

"Yes, curse him!" he muttered to himself, "I believe he would have struck me down with a good will, had he only dared. I must look out for him, now, for there was murder in his eye. Maybe I have pushed him too far. I hold a dangerous secret, and I must look out for my life. He could desire nothing better than to have me well out of his path. Yes, I must look out for him—must look out for him."

CHAPTER XXI.

CHANGE OF THE SCENE.

ON the morning following the events in order, there was a sensation in police circles.

At an early hour a young woman had

rushed into the Police Headquarters, casting herself at the feet of some officers standing just within the main entrance, in excited accents declaring she was guilty of murder.

The first surprise over, she was lifted up and asked to tell her story.

She was young and fair, and looked any thing but a murderer, but her eyes were red and her face worn.

It took but a few moments to begin to get at the thing in proper shape, and a detective sergeant took it in hand to learn the facts, whatever they might be.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Mildred Daniels," the answer.

"Whom have you killed?"

"It was I who killed Beatrice Kassinger, sir."

"The deuce!"

This detective-sergeant was the one who had been first on the ground after that murder, and who had arrested William Gerredson for the crime.

"It is true," the girl assured. "I am the guilty wretch. Please let him—I mean Mr. Gerredson—please let him go, and put me in his place."

"I thought I had seen your face before," said the detective-sergeant. "But, can you prove that you are guilty, as you confess you are?"

"Prove it?" and the girl eyed him wonderingly.

"Exactly. The law cannot deal with you, unless you can prove what you say. It has already condemned one person for that crime."

"But, I did do it, sir; I confess that I did it; is not that enough?"

"No; it must be proven."

The girl seemed bewildered at this. It was something which, evidently, had never occurred to her—had never been known—never dreamed of.

"What kind of law have we, then?" she demanded. "If a guilty person comes and confesses, must there be a trial to prove the person so? Can you not even arrest me and lock me up?"

"We'll detain you, of course, but not arrest you. But, let me question you a little further: If you are the guilty one, why did you kill Miss Kassinger?"

"Because I loved her lover, and could not see her win him."

"It seems, though, that she was not likely to win him; she did not want him; it was shown at his trial that she had that night cast him off."

"Yes, yes; I know; it was because she abused him, too, that I killed her. I could not hope to win him, as he had never noticed me, but I was determined he should not waste himself upon her."

"Then you heard their quarrel?"

"Yes, yes. I was hiding in the room. I killed her—"

"Where and how did you get the dagger? And how came the blood upon the coat Mr. Gerredson had on?"

"Yes, yes, I can explain all that, sir. Beatrice herself had the dagger in the house, sir, and I knew where it was—"

"Hold on; why did you not tell this at the trial?"

"Can you not see? I hoped Mr. Gerredson would get free, and I certainly did not want to suffer for it myself."

"But you have now changed your mind."

"Oh! I could not bear it, I could not bear it! To think of the man I love dying for a crime I had done—It was too terrible!"

"You say the dagger had been in Beatrice's possession—How did she get it? How did you know she had it and where she kept it? When did it come into her possession?"

"She took it one day when she visited his room, after he had been sick. She went with flowers, and seeing it on the mantel, took it. She told me about it, said it was only for a joke. I happened to see it one day, and asked her what the letters W. G. meant."

"This is getting serious," spoke the detective-sergeant to those around him. "Now explain about the blood, Miss Daniels."

"When I left the house my arm was all blood, sir, and I ran to get home as quickly as possible. I left the house only a few moments after Mr. Gerredson, and I had not gone far when I saw him ahead of me on the street. I ran faster, and wanted to get past

him without letting him guess who it was, and just as I was about to pass he stepped in my way and I ran against him."

"And so smeared the blood on his coat."

"Yes, yes. Oh! will you not believe me, sir? Will you not let him go and put me in his place?"

"You have confessed that you love him; maybe this is only a crazy desire to sacrifice yourself for him. It is not for me to let him go; no one can do that but the courts."

"Then let them hear me—Do something, sir, something that will set him free and let me suffer for what I have done."

"It will take time. It cannot be done in a moment. If you are telling the truth there will be a way to prove it, I have no doubt. Officers, detain her a moment till I return."

The result was, that Mildred Daniels was held while investigation could be made.

Just as soon as possible the police detective-sergeant paid a visit to the Tombs for the purpose of questioning Gerredson.

His badge admitted him.

"I have dropped in to ask you a question or two concerning the events of the night of Miss Kassinger's death," he announced.

"All that has been passed upon once, sir," the poor prisoner reminded, sadly. "You of the police have done the worst you can for me; you have made out your case against me."

"Do not feel too bitter toward us, sir; the case was one that worked itself out, all the circumstances being against you."

"Well, maybe I am too severe. What are the questions you want to ask?"

"Something has taken place that may possibly lead to your liberation, if you are indeed innocent, as you so determinedly maintain."

"And I am—I'll swear it with my dying breath."

"Well, give attention, and do not interrupt me till I am done: On that night when you left the house, after your quarrel with Miss Kassinger, you were walking a way when a woman ran against you, at some distance from the house, I do not know just how far. Did you get a glimpse of her face? Did you recognize her?"

"Nothing of the kind happened, sir," said the prisoner, quietly. "I walked only to the corner, where I boarded a car. No one ran against me."

"You are sure upon this point?"

"Yes, for I have gone over the events of that night a thousand times trying to account for the blood on my sleeve. Now, tell me, why have you come to ask me these questions?"

"A person has surrendered to the police, confessing the crime."

"Thank God! At last, at last!"

The face of the prisoner lighted up, and he almost sprung from his seat on the cot at the good news.

Immediately, however, his bright look vanished.

"I cannot believe it, however, if that person claims she ran against me after I left the house, in that way accounting for the blood on my coat. That certainly did not happen. But who is she?"

"It is Mildred Daniels."

"Impossible!"

"Not at all; I tell you only the truth."

"She has given herself up to the police, saying she killed her cousin?"

"Yes."

"I do not believe it—I cannot believe it. Why, what motive could she possibly have for such a deed as that? It's out of reason."

"She has given a reason. She says she did it because of her love for you—"

"Why, she is mad—she must be mad!"

"One other thing, and a very important point, she explains how she got the dagger with which the deed was done."

"Tell me, how?"

This the detective-sergeant did.

"She has told that she saw the dagger in the possession of Beatrice, you say. That Beatrice acknowledged to her that she had taken it from my room."

Gerredson said this more in the way of musing than questioning.

"Just as I have told you," the detective affirmed. "Says Beatrice took it one day when she visited your room. Mildred saw it accidentally in her possession. I understand it, and Beatrice told her all about it."

She had taken it in a joke, as I get at the facts."

"Well, well, I do not know—I cannot understand. But, it is impossible that Mildred can be the guilty one; and yet, why would she come and confess—"

"To save you."

"No, no, she cannot do that—she must not do that, if she is guiltless, and she must be. Is she not out of her right mind? Is she not insane? Surely there must be something wrong."

"You speak as though you *know* she did not do it, sir."

"I cannot swear that she did not do it, but I do not believe she did. Why, it is out of reason."

"But, see her motive: She loved you, and she hated her cousin because you loved her. She was present at your quarrel that night, and in her rage she killed her cousin as soon as you had gone."

"My God! Can it be true—can it be true?"

"You are sure on the point that no woman ran against you on the street, before you took the car?"

"I can swear to it, sir. I met few persons, and no one passed me going in the same direction. Will you do me a favor?"

"What is it?"

"Send word to my lawyer about this strange occurrence."

"Yes, I will do that, certainly, sir. I hope you will get clear, even yet, if you are innocent."

"Whether I do or not, sir, I am innocent none the less."

"You have impressed me during this brief talk."

The detective-sergeant took his leave, at that, and the prisoner threw himself upon his cot and tried to think the matter out. That, however, he could not do. There was only one thing of which he was sure, and that was—his own innocence. All the rest besides was guessing—dark, dark guessing.

CHAPTER XXII.

FOLLOWING THE THREAD.

It had been arranged that any communication from the prisoner to his friend, the Lawyer Detective, was to be made through the law office of Hough and Brief, the lawyers who, with John Gale, had the prisoner's defense in charge.

In this manner the Lawyer Detective could remain in the background, if need be. And so it was, when the detective-sergeant kept his word and sent a report of the new phase in the case to these lawyers, as the prisoner had requested, he had no knowledge that he was sending it to a rival detective.

But that would have made no difference anyhow; he would have done it just the same, undoubtedly; still, the precaution was not out of place.

As said, it was early, and as Gale had intended dropping into the office of Hough & Brief that morning, he reached the office about the same time the detective's message came in.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Hough, when he read the brief note the boy had delivered. "This will interest you, Gale."

He gave it into the hand of the Lawyer Detective as he spoke, and a similar exclamation escaped his lips as he grasped the meaning of the contents.

The messenger was dismissed, and the two men fell to considering the new turn events had taken.

"What do you make of it?" asked Gale.

"You must see the prisoner at once, and caution him to keep tight lips, and then interview this girl," advised Hough.

"Little need to see Gerredson," Gale rejoined. "Nothing will escape him but the truth, and on that and that alone his defense must rest. I'll go and see the girl."

"If she can prove she did the deed, that will clear your friend, of course. But, little use to speculate till we know more about it. I'll drop around and see the prisoner myself, and prepare him for this new feature, so that he can take advantage of it."

Gale quickly executed the business that had brought him there, and set out in haste to see Miss Daniels.

Inquiring at Headquarters, he found she was at the House of Detention.

He was quickly in her presence.

She was weeping, greatly excited and nervous, almost overcome. At sight of the Lawyer Detective her tears poured forth afresh.

"What great story is this you have been telling?" Gale gently demanded.

"I have told only the truth," was the broken response.

"Then all you told me before were lies—nothing but lies? I can hardly believe it of you."

Her sobs were his answer.

"It is plain that you lied then or are lying now," he added. "Now, for your own sake, and for the sake of all concerned, let me have nothing but the simple truth from you."

"Yes, yes, it is true—is true," she declared, in gasps, almost. "It was I who killed Beatrice. You must make it known, Mr. Gale, and so get Mr. Gerredson out of prison. I should be in his place; I could not stand it any longer and had to confess. I had hoped he would get clear."

The Lawyer Detective put questions similar to those which had been asked by the police-sergeant, and soon had the whole story.

He was a puzzled man.

In his heart he believed the girl was lying; she was too tender and gentle to be guilty of such a crime.

But, here she had come, of her own will, confessing the deed, knowing well her fate if the facts she might present would bear out her declaration. Could it be she had gone mad?"

About the time Gale was in possession of all the facts, in walked the detective-sergeant.

He greeted the Lawyer Detective in a friendly way.

"Well, I have been to see the condemned man," he said, "and his story and that of yours do not hang well together, Miss Daniels."

"How is that?" asked Gale.

"First let me ask this lady a question, please: Where was it you ran against him, as you explained to me, Miss Daniels?"

"I do not know exactly, sir."

"Was it near the house? He must have had time to walk quite a distance before you overtook him."

The question was artfully asked, and as artfully the answer directed. Right here would hinge the keynote of the whole matter, the officer believed.

"Oh! I hardly know," was the reply. "It was some distance away, I think."

"Yes, it must have been. Several blocks, no doubt."

"It was several blocks."

The detective-sergeant smiled, giving Gale a swift glance.

"Well, there is a mistake out somewhere," he now said, "for Mr. Gerredson declares he took a car at the avenue, and is positive no woman ran against him on his way there. And the avenue, you know, is not far from the house."

He looked at the girl sharply, and she seemed for a moment confused.

"You seem to have caught yourself," observed Gale.

"No, no," she then quickly cried. "I see it all, I understand how it must be. He recognized me, and for my sake he is willing to deny that any one ran against him on the street."

"Yes; but he says he took the cars at the avenue, while you say you overtook him some blocks away."

"It is he who is telling the falsehood, then, sir."

The two detectives looked at each other in a puzzled way, and he of the police gave Gale a signal that they would talk in private.

Gale excused himself, saying he would return, and followed the detective sergeant out.

"What do you think about it?" the sergeant asked.

"I have reason to believe the girl is lying," answered Gale, bluntly.

"So have I, and the best reason is, that the proof is so tightly wedged upon the prisoner that she can't break it."

"What's her motive in placing herself in this position?"

"She loves him, and thinks to clear him."

"I suppose you take little interest in her further, having made up your mind she tells a falsehood."

"You strike it about right, I think. I don't believe the police will hold her, if she can't bring better proof in support of her story. There is a way to prove it."

"How is that?"

"The dress she wore that night must show stains of blood upon it, if she was so smeared that her running against Gerredson daubed him up as he was."

"I have thought of that, and mean to investigate. Everything is a clew, for me, working as I am to establish the innocence of my friend. Even if this young woman is lying, some good may come out of it."

"Go ahead. The only thing we shall do will be to have her examined as to her sanity."

They parted, and Gale returned to the young woman.

"Now, Miss Daniels, see here," he said: "you know I am the friend of the man you profess to love, and I want you to give me the plain and simple truth. You are mistaken in thinking you can save him in this way, unless you can prove at your trial you are guilty of the crime, and that you cannot do. You may only get yourself into a bad fix and do him no good whatever."

"How do you mean?"

"They may judge you insane, and confine you in an asylum. Once there, you might find it difficult to convince them of your sanity afterward."

"That will be better than the death-chair; I think I should prefer that. I am guilty, Mr. Gale."

She said it in a way to indicate that it was true, or that her mind was fully made up to stick to it, at any rate.

There was nothing for the Lawyer Detective to do but to leave her.

"Very well, if you are determined to play this role, there is only one thing for me to do," he said,

"And what is that?"

"Prove whether you are telling the truth or not."

"You can do that only by prevailing upon Mr. Gerredson to admit the whole truth, sir."

"I believe he has told the whole truth now, and has nothing further to disclose. I still hold him innocent, and I cannot think, either, that you are guilty of the awful deed."

Twenty minutes later he was at the residence of Gower Terwilliger.

It was Gower himself who opened the door to him, having been on the point of going out when Gale rung the bell.

His face was dark, shewing that he was in a rage over something, and recognizing the Lawyer Detective at sight, he did not greet him pleasantly.

"Well?" he gruffly demanded.

Gale had done some rapid thinking in that brief moment, and meant to sound this gentleman at once.

"I want to see Miss Daniels, sir," he announced.

"Not at home, sir, not at home," was snarled at him.

"That being the case, my business is with you."

"You'll have to call again, have to call again," hastily. "I am going out on business of importance."

"This business of mine is important, sir, and must be attended to. I must have a few minutes of private talk with you."

"What about, sir, what about?"

"About the murder of Beatrice Kassinger."

The Lawyer Detective looked him squarely in the eyes, and it appeared to him that the Englishman looked troubled.

"What about it?" he demanded.

"Well, there is some suspicion that points toward this house, sir, and it is for you to clear it away."

Gower now paled a little.

"Suspicion here," he gasped. "Who is suspected? What are you talking about, anyhow?"

"If you will ask me in we can talk more at ease, I think. Then I can give you all the particulars, and hear what you have to say."

"But, I'm in a hurry now, sir. Can't you call again? That confounded fool of a niece

of mine has run away, and I want to set the police on track of the silly jade."

"If that is all, you need not trouble your self, Mr. Terwilliger. She is in the hands of the police now. Whether they hold her or not will depend on what I shall learn here, perhaps. No need for you to go out to find her; she is in safe keeping."

Gower Terwilliger's face assumed an ashy hue, and he clutched the side of the doorway for support. Nothing of which was lost to the detective.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GALE CONFRONTS GOWER.

THE Lawyer Detective waited for the British bulldog to speak first.

"Wh—what do you mean?" Terwilliger presently managed to gasp. "You don't mean to say she has been arrested for the crime!"

"Not arrested, no; but she is held, and I want to find proof of her innocence or guilt, whichever it may be. And you are the man to help me. But this is no place for us to talk about it."

"What did you mean by asking to see her, when you knew she was in the hands of the police, then?"

"I wanted to learn whether you knew about it yet."

"You are a tricky rascal, that's what you are, sir, a tricky rascal. But, come in and we'll have it out."

"Thank you for the compliment, sir," said Gale, in even tone, as he entered and closed the door after him. "One has to meet kind with kind, sir, in this tricky world."

The thick-necked Englishman merely grunted as he led the way into a room, and he threw himself upon a chair without any invitation to Gale to be seated.

This did not matter, however, for Gale took a seat all the same, and proceeded direct to business.

"Now, Mr. Terwilliger," he said, the thing is just here: Was it your niece who killed Miss Kassinger? or was it yourself?"

Terwilliger almost dropped from his chair to the floor.

His face grew deathly, and then assumed a purple color as if he was about to choke to death.

"That's what I want to know," Gale pressed him. "The man who killed Philip Kassinger would have about the same motive for killing the girl, and there is a suspicion in your direction."

Gower Terwilliger gasped, trying to speak, but could not utter a sound. Then he began to flutter his hands helplessly.

"Whoever it was poisoned Philip Kassinger, I say," the lawyer detective urged home, speaking slowly, deliberately and distinctly, "that person probably took the life of the girl. Now, sir, defend yourself of the serious suspicion that you are the man who did both."

"Great heavens!" the bewildered man exploded. "You don't mean to say Philip Kassinger died of poison, do you?"

"Exactly, sir. He was murdered."

"It can't be possible! How do you know this thing, young man? And what do you mean by hinting at such a thing as my having committed the crime? By heavens, I have a notion to pitch you out of this house."

Gale went over some of the points, briefly but unsparingly.

"It's out of reason!" Gower cried, while he mopped the perspiration from his brow. "I'm as innocent of it as you are, and so I believe is my niece. If you have any proofs against us, bring them out. You are placing yourself in a serious position, I think, young man."

"Not at all, sir. I am making no charges against you. I am merely showing you some suspicious indications. Your mere denial does not do much to sweep them away. Can't you do that?"

"I have no call to do so, unless I am arrested. If you want to do that, go ahead."

"I do not consider that my proofs are sufficient, sir. I had rather think you innocent. But, how about your niece?"

"Can you prove she did it?"

"I want to prove that she did not do it, and I want your help."

"And I'm most willing to give that. I

think I can explain her conduct without missing the mark."

"How do you explain it?"

"I'll tell you, plainly. Last night I had another stormy interview with the stubborn thing, and I told her what was what—that she had to marry a man whom I have selected for her. The fire-cat defied me, and declared she would place herself beyond my reach, and this is the way she has done it."

Gale felt that he had come at the truth.

He could not believe Gower Terwilliger guilty of the crimes that had been committed, in spite of all appearances, and he certainly did not believe Mildred had killed her cousin.

"I am convinced that you are right, sir," he said. "I meant to get at the truth of the matter if I could, and came here with the intention of placing the facts before you just as they are. I will say, now, that I do not believe you guilty of the crimes that have been done. Now, there is a question I must ask, and on your answer to it will depend much."

"What is it?"

"Can you tell me what dress Mildred Daniels had on upon the night on which her cousin was killed?"

"No, I don't know one dress from another, for I never look at a woman's toggery. I'll tell you who can, though, and that's Mary, the girl here."

"Call her."

Mary was called, and the same question was put to her.

"Yes, I do know, sir," she said, promptly. "It was her gray gown, the same one she had on this morning when she went out, and the same light sack, too."

"The sack, too, eh? Then she was out on that night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know where?"

"I do not, sir."

Here the Lawyer Detective had run up against another snag, as he mentally decided.

If the girl was out on that night, and it appeared she was, and she could keep secret where she had been, it would be one point toward the support of the confession she had made.

"How do you remember the dress and sack she had on upon that particular night, my good woman?" Gale pressed further.

"The poor girl hasn't an over supply of things, sir, and really it is about the only gown she has that is anything like new and decent to wear, if I must tell the whole truth and shame the devil."

The answer was a chapter of revelation.

"That's all that's wanted of you," growled Terwilliger. "Are you satisfied now, sir?" to Gale.

"Yes, I'm satisfied on some points," was the answer. "I must know, however, where Miss Daniels was that evening. I'll find that out somehow. This work has barely begun yet."

The servant had left the room in haste, and it was now Gower's turn.

"Now," said he, "if you are done, young man, I'll take a hand in this thing myself. I want to know how you learned Philip Kassinger died of poison, if he did, which I very much doubt."

"The body has been taken up and the stomach examined."

"Is that so? By whose orders was it done, I should like to ask? But I suppose it was done by the police, who are suspicious of everything. Or, more likely still, by your orders, thinking thus to prove a double crime in the interest of that murderer friend of yours."

"You are mistaken all around, sir. I know little or nothing about it yet, beyond the facts mentioned."

"And how do you know these?"

"That I prefer not to tell. I can, however, put you on track of the information."

"Well, do that, then."

"Your young friend, Mr. Awstin, can probably tell you all about it."

"My friend Mr. Awstin?"

"Yes; the young Bowery blood whom you want to marry Theresa Kassinger, in order that you may reap some of her fortune, the same as you expect to reap some of Mr. Peterson's when you have married your niece to him."

"Zounds!" cried the enraged rascal. "This to me!"

"Exactly. You can't deny it; I see through your game. That is the pretty scheme you have at work."

"Eternal zounds! Why, you young upstart, are you aware to whom you are talking? I am one of the solid men of this city, and do you think I'd stoop to anything so low and base?"

"That's a fine showing of dignity, sir, but it won't serve as a mask. What I assert is something I know."

"And how do you know it?"

"In the same way as I know a good many things, sir. What is more, I can prove it. This, however, is another matter, and I care little about it. What I am after is to find the slayer of Beatrice Kassinger. Your questions have led to this new disclosure."

"But, tell me, how comes Awstin to be concerned in it?"

"Ask him. If he will take you into his confidence, well and good; if not, I will not have betrayed him."

And with that the Lawyer Detective took his leave, refusing to enlighten the bulldog Britisher further in the matter, and leaving him a very puzzled and anxious man, indeed.

This interview had satisfied Gale upon two points: First, that Terwilliger was not the murderer, and second, that he did not know who was. In fact, a previous conversation he had overheard had established these points.

Then, too, he believed he now saw through Miss Daniels's object in declaring herself guilty.

From here he went direct to see her again.

"Well, now I have the proof that you did not do the deed," he confidently asserted.

"What is your proof?" very apathetically.

"This is the dress you wore on that night, and there is no blood on it. The same with your sack. Where are the stains of the blood with which you smeared Gerredson in passing him?"

"How did you find out?" the girl asked, wonderingly.

"Never mind; I know."

"Then of course I didn't do the deed."

"To be sure you did not. Your only object in playing this part is to escape the persecutions of your uncle-guardian."

"Then I must be insane, I suppose. If I didn't do it, and am so sure I did, then there must be something wrong, and I had better be shut up in a mad-house. Don't you think so?"

Soberly, earnestly she said it.

"That will be for somebody else to decide," answered Gale. "I will call and see you again ere long, if you remain here."

Leaving her, he went home, where he found his ally ready for anything he might require of her, and with her he went to Police Headquarters. The result of which was, that Julia Carvingham was admitted to the house of detention to watch over Mildred Daniels and be companion to her.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TERRIBLY ACCUSED.

THE New York sport who cuts his eye-teeth on the Bowery, and has his wits sharpened by constant friction against his own class, is seldom to be caught napping.

It sometimes happens that he is caught, nevertheless, when the tireless guardians of the city's peace get after him in earnest for some offense, but it is generally after a long and tireless chase, and when he is thoroughly wide awake.

John Awstin was a fellow of this stamp.

He had been under suspicion several times, under one name or another, but so far had never been taken in.

And now there was small likelihood that he ever would be, having practically deserted his native stamping ground and gone over to the camp of the Four Hundred, where he had somehow found footing.

Being a fellow of this type, then, with his wits well about him, and having the knowledge he had of the Kassinger household, he had focused his mind upon the matter of the murder mystery after the disclosure his worthy parent had made to him. And now he believed he had solved it, too.

On the afternoon of the day following events in order, he presented himself at the door of the Kassinger residence and asked for Theresa.

He was admitted, but coolly received.

"I have called on a matter of sentiment and business combined," he humbly announced. "You will patiently hear me, I trust."

"Come to the point at once, Mr. Awstin," the young woman coldly requested.

"What I have to say is of a very delicate nature," he proceeded to preface, leaning forward and speaking in a low tone. "It concerns you, and is something that must not be overheard."

"Go on," she said simply.

She was pale and worn-looking and her manner was freezing.

"There is so little difference—was so little difference, in looks, between you and your sister that to love one was to love both, and—"

"Sir!"

She fastened her eyes upon him, as though to pierce him through with the very fire of their glance.

"I mean it," he said, earnestly. "If I loved your sister, that love has now gone out to you with even greater force, and I have to tell you of it. You are to me all—"

"That is quite enough, sir," she interrupted stiffly, rising. "Please take your leave as promptly as you know how, and never enter this house again. If you deceived my poor sister as to your true character and intention, you cannot deceive me, and I bid you go!"

The rascal smiled confidently, but made no move to obey the order.

"That's quite pretty acting," he said, "but you can't do it to perfection. You can't quite get the natural touch, you see."

"Wretch! what do you mean?"

"Do you think you can shut my eye, Beatrice Kassinger?"

"My God! What do you mean? I thought you a fool; now I believe you must be crazy."

"Not so crazy as you might imagine, my dear. Beatrice, I know you, in spite of all your fine pretending, and you have got to marry me, or I'll blow out on you. Do you see?"

The young woman, as pale as death, pressed her hand to her forehead, staggered, and grabbed a chair for support.

"I cannot—cannot comprehend," she gasped. "In heaven's name, what do you mean?"

"Well played, very well played, but it won't work. I mean just this: That you, Beatrice Kassinger, murdered your sister Theresa, and now you are playing her part in the life drama—"

"Oh, God! Has it come to this? Wretch! Miserable, vile scoundrel! Have you dared to come here and make such a charge against me? Was not my grief alone hard enough to bear? But you shall prove it! Come! Come with me to my father! You shall prove it, I say!"

She laid hold upon his arm and tried to drag him toward the door.

"Wait," he said. "Listen. This is all very nice playing, but it will not serve you—"

"Come! I say. Come with me! You shall face my father! The wonder is that a just Vengeance does not strike you dead where you stand. Come! I say. Come!"

Her voice was pitched aloud, and her command imperative.

Awstin tried to hold back, tried to say further, but she would not hear him. She would not let him speak.

"Cranford!" she called aloud to the butler. "Cranford! Come here quickly! You shall face my father, you heartless knave! If he does not have you arrested it will be strange."

The rascal now lost some of his boldness, turning pale.

It looked as though he had made a mistake, shrewd as he thought himself to be.

He was given no chance to argue the matter, however, for the butler was very prompt in answering the urgent call, coming running into the room.

"Lay hold upon that rascal, Cranford, and drag him up to papa's room, the fierce beauty ordered. "You need take no care in handling him gently, either, if he resists. He is the worst viper that ever entered our house."

Awstin made a show of resisting, but he was no match for the powerful butler, who forced him from the room in a hurry.

"You need not be rough about it," the young rascal said. "I'll go along with you without your tearing me all to pieces. Remember, I am a gentleman, sir!"

"A gentleman!" sneered Theresa, who was following them. "And you will go willingly—because you have to. Do not mind him, Cranford; papa and I will be responsible for all."

She sprung ahead, on reaching the top of the stairs, and threw open the door of her father's room without ceremony.

"Mr. Kassinger, in his invalid's chair, stared at her questioningly.

"Oh! Papa!"

So she cried, and threw herself upon her knees before him, grasping his thin hand in her usual fond way.

"Great heavens!" the old man gasped. "What

is the matter, my child? What is the matter? What is it, Cranford?"

"I don't know, sir; she ordered me to bring this fellow to you by force."

"Oh! it is too terrible, too terrible!" cried the sobbing girl. "After all we have suffered, to have this added."

"But, my child, what is it? What is—"

"That wretch!" and the girl pointed at the cowering Awstin, her eyes flashing with hatred. "He says I am Beatrice, and that I am the murderer of my sister—that it is Theresa who is dead!"

With a gasp, almost, the old man laid both hands on the shoulders of his favorite child, pushed her off a little, and gazed long and earnestly into her face.

She met his look steadily, her great, soft eyes swimming in tears, and at length drew her to him, embracing her.

"Could you doubt me, papa?" she sobbed.

"Oh! could you doubt me?"

"I am almost crazed, Theresa," was the sorrowful response. "The possible and the impossible are as one. I know not my own thoughts."

"But, what will you do with this wretch who makes so terrible a charge against me? What ought to be done to him? The wonder is that the spirit of poor Beatrice does not confront him here and now."

"What is to be done, Cranford?" the helpless man asked.

"I'd first hear what he has to say, sir," was the respectful suggestion.

"Yes, yes, that's so; what have you to say for yourself, sir? What do you mean by such a mean accusation as you have made?"

"It seems that I missed my guess, sir, that is all I can say," was the answer made. "Everybody is guessing about the mystery, and this was my guess. I'm willing to take it back."

"Why don't you have him arrested, papa?"

"Ought I to, Cranford?"

"He is not worth the trouble, sir. Give me leave to kick him out of the house, and I'll do that for him."

"He deserves it—vile, miserable scoundrel that he is!" cried Theresa. "He came to me with an offer of marriage, thus showing clearly what he is, and what his intentions were toward poor Beatrice."

"An offer of marriage! The presumptuous rascal! And so soon after the terrible death of Beatrice, whom he professed to love! You dog! it would be too good for you were you tarred and feathered and turned loose. What puts such a suspicion in your mind, I want to know?"

"Well, the fact that your brother was poisoned, and that his death and that of Theresa would be of great vantage to Beatrice, if she could only play the rôle, and take the place of Theresa."

"Fool!" Theresa cried. "May Heaven's curse rest on you, for the mean suspicion you would cast upon my dead sister's memory!"

"Worse than fool!" echoed Mr. Kassinger. "You shall be kicked out of the house as Cranford has suggested; and you may thank your lucky stars that we do not have you arrested."

"Which ought to be done," urged Theresa, quickly.

There was just then a tap at the door.

"Come!"

A servant entered with a card.

"Show him right up here," directed Theresa, promptly. "Papa, it is Theodore, and I have made up my mind to a resolve concerning him."

"What is that?"

"It is this: I will marry him this hour, unless you forbid. I ought to have a protector, and I think it is folly to put off our marriage a few weeks or months, when I am so in need. You, dear papa, are helpless, you know—a circumstance this rascal ought to be grateful for, I can tell him."

"You are right! Were I as I used to be I would fling him from a window of this very room, let the result be what it might!"

"I can well believe it."

Theodore Peyterson now entered, and looked inquiringly at the excited faces of those there.

"What is wrong?" he respectfully asked.

"This villain, this worse than villain," answered Theresa. "He has presumed to ask me to marry him, so soon after the death of Beatrice; yet, worse, claiming that I am Beatrice!"

Peyterson could only stare in amazement, while the facts were quickly placed before him, standing with clinched fists and blazing eyes, glaring at Awstin. And as soon as he heard all, he cried:

"Mr. Kassinger, give me leave to kick this cur out of the house!"

CHAPTER XXV.

SUSPICION SUPPORTED.

AWSTIN was returning his stare with stubborn defiance.

"You had better let a larger man undertake that job," he said, doggedly. "You could not do it, The. Peyterson."

"I have already given Cranford orders to do that very thing, Mr. Peyterson," the aged invalid answered. "Cranford, put him out of

the house straightway. And you, sir, never show your face here again."

"I'll go without any force, sir. If force is used, you may hear of it again. Yes, I'll go, and I don't make no threats, I don't," dropping into Bowery lingo; "but maybe I haven't shown my hand in full. Theresa Kassinger, I won't forget this deal in a hurry."

"It's to be hoped you won't," snapped Peyterson. "If I thought you would, I'd impress it with my boot."

The butler was already removing the fellow, though, and the door closed after them before Awstin was given chance to make any reply.

He was conducted to the front door, a prisoner, and there was thrust out with force enough to make him aware of the fact that he had not taken leave of his own free will.

No sooner had he been taken from the room than Theresa turned to Peyterson, saying:

"Theodore, I have just disclosed to papa a determination I have arrived at, and which I will now make known to you, though I dread that you will think it too bold in me."

He was looking at her questioningly.

"I am sure anything you have determined upon must be all right, Theresa," he said.

"Well, it is this: The insult of the past few minutes has shown me that I am in need of a natural protector, and I am ready to become your wife this hour if you will take me. It is—"

"Bless you! my darling!"

"It is only a little sooner than the day set, anyhow, and as it is our own concern, we need not care what others say about it."

"But your father—Mr. Kassinger, do you agree?"

"My daughter's will is my will, Mr. Peyterson," was the reply. "I am helpless here in my chair, and she certainly ought to have a strong arm to lean upon; and as it is to be, anyhow, it may as well be now, I suppose."

"Of course I would never say no to such an agreeable proposition," declared the happy lover.

Nothing that could have happened would have pleased him more than this.

It was playing right into his hands.

"Then here is my hand," and Theresa extended her hand to him. "Papa, if you will send for the clergyman it can be speedily done and over with."

"If you desire it, my child."

"Is it not better so?"

"Perhaps you are right, and I will do your bidding."

Accordingly a message was sent forth by the butler, and in due time it was answered by the clergyman in person, and the ceremony was performed.

It was a relief to Peyterson when it was over.

Now he could defy Gower Terwilliger, and now he was sure of a finger in the Kassinger fortune.

The minister had just taken his leave when John Gale was announced.

He was conducted to the invalid's room.

Naturally he showed surprise when he was introduced to Theresa as Mrs. Peyterson, but it was no more than natural.

"This is quite a surprise," he remarked. "I can offer hearty congratulations to you both. And, if you have surprised me, perhaps I will be able to surprise you in return."

"In what way?" asked the blushing bride.

"There is one question I would ask before I tell you. That answered, I will explain—unless you have heard."

"What is the question?"

"This: Was your cousin Mildred here on the night upon which your sister was murdered?"

"She was not, to my knowledge."

It was evident to the Lawyer Detective that none of these had heard the news, for they looked at him inquiringly.

"Then it must be true that she is out of her mind, I think. She—"

"Out of her mind?" exclaimed Theresa.

"Yes. She has given herself up to the police, saying that she, and not Will Gerredson, was the slayer of your sister."

"Impossible!" Theresa cried, while her father gave voice to a similar exclamation.

"So I think it, too," agreed Gale, "but she strongly insists upon the truth of the statement she has made."

"I say it's impossible," Theresa repeated. "In the first place, she was not in the house that night, and in the second place why would she put the crime upon Mr. Gerredson?"

"She explains every point cleverly and well."

Gale thereupon gave them the particulars, but reserving to himself the facts to the contrary which he had gleaned.

And here was another fact to the contrary—the fact that Mildred Daniels had not been in the house on that night. He could see no reason why any false statement should be made regarding that.

This had been his errand, to gain this point, and after some further conversation he took his leave.

When he reached home he found a visitor awaiting him.

It was John Awsttin.

He was waiting in the reception-room, and as soon as the Lawyer Detective saw who it was he asked him up to his own room.

"Well, this is unexpected," Gale observed, when he had seated his visitor.

"Yes, I s'pose it must be," Awsttin agreed. "I might almost say it's unexpected to me myself. I'm here on biz."

"As I naturally supposed."

"You are the lawyer fellow who is trying to clear Gerredson of the murder of Beatrice Kassinger, ain't you?"

"I am he."

"Then you are the man I want to see. I knew you, but I wanted to come at it in that way. I think it won't be hard for you to do the business up for the prisoner and bring him out all right."

"After it was partly your testimony that sent him below."

"What I told was gospel, every word of it. Now I'm onto somethin' else, and somethin' that looks to pan big. You'll excuse my easy talk; it comes more natural to me than the nicey-nice sort, you see."

"Then you have discovered something new?"

"I think I have, and somethin' that will make a big stir if you can get your grip onto it."

"Let me hear what it is."

"Well, my honest belief is that Beatrice Kassinger is not dead at all."

"Oh, pshaw! man; there is no use talking that way."

Gale suspected what the fellow had in mind, something he himself had considered secretly, but in this way he wanted to draw out more.

"I ain't sayin' the murdered one wasn't dead enough," Awsttin explained, "but I don't believe that one was Beatrice."

"Then you think it was Theresa?"

"I certainly do."

Gale was thoughtful for some time, looking at his visitor keenly.

This thought had come to him, but he had not dared harbor it. The very hideousness of it had shocked him.

No, it could not be true. To hint such a thing would be to bring grief anew upon that family, and perhaps invite arrest, if the point could be covered by a charge that would hold.

And yet— But, he did not speculate further.

"Have you any proof of this?" he asked Awsttin. "What has made you suspect so terrible a thing?"

"No, I can't prove it, but I believe it all the same."

"And my other question?"

"A good many little things have made me suspect it. Who would have a bigger interest in the death of Philip and Theresa Kassinger than Beatrice herself?"

"Explain."

"Why, Theresa was rich, and the death of her uncle made her doubly so. Now if Beatrice could take her place, don't you see, she would be in 'lover, if nobody found it out."

"Would you dare to go and make this charge to her face?"

"That is just what I have done, sir."

"Ha! and with what result?"

"The worst. She rose up, defied me, had that giant of a butler drag me to her father, bluffed out to him, and wanted me arrested. Raised the very dickens in general."

"All of which would speak well for her innocence and for your mistake."

"I know it; but all the same I think I'm right."

"It does not look so. But who could suspect a woman of such a deed as that? There they were, twin sisters, apparently loving and happy, and— Oh, you had better get the thought out of your mind, Mr. Awsttin."

"She did fire up as though she was innocent, that's so."

"The wonder is, they did not have you arrested on the spot. You had a nerve to go there and make such a charge, I must say."

"It was make or break, and— well, I broke."

"I think I understand it. You loved Beatrice, and, she dead, you thought you would simply transfer your affections to the other and come in for her fortune. It was a good game, but it seems it did not work."

It was now Awsttin's turn to show surprise.

"Failing in that, you made this charge, thinking it possible it *might* be true, and if it was, she would throw herself into your arms and beg you to keep the secret. But this she did not do—further proof of her innocence and of your mistake. And now, out of revenge, you come to me with the same suspicion."

"Lawyer, you are the devil at guessing. I own up to the corn. But, all the same, I think it's so, and that she is going to face the matter to the end and win in spite of everything. If it is so, she's got to fight, and don't you forget it; and she is just the one to do it, too. She's got nerve enough for a whole detective force, and if you beat her at her own game, you will have to get up early, that's all."

"You had better give up the idea," advised Gale, though he had no intention of doing so. He wanted to disarm Awsttin, and investigate

for himself in a very quiet manner. "She certainly is not guilty, or she would have broken down when you made the charge against her. No, no; that is not to be thought of. And, if I were you, I would take care how I mentioned this thing around. You had better keep it to yourself. I tell you this in a friendly way, as a lawyer."

CHAPTER XXVI.

PICKING UP POINTS.

His visitor gone, John Gale did some hard thinking.

This suspicion that had been laid before him by the baffled rascal, whose only object had been revenge, was one that had been thought of by him.

It was, however, one he had not dared to harbor, for the very hideousness of it had appalled him. It did not look either reasonable or possible that it could be as had been suggested.

And yet—well, he must prove that it was not so.

This was the only way to dispose of the matter in a right manner. There must be some way of getting at it.

"One thing I would like to know," he said to himself. "I would like to know the persons who dug up that body and removed the stomach for examination. I want to learn what kind of poison was used."

Taking out his pocketbook, he opened it and took from it a small white packet neatly folded.

This he opened, looking intently at its contents.

It held a powder, of a peculiar tint and appearance, something he had never seen before.

That, however, did not signify anything, for he had no knowledge whatever of poisons, save the simpler sort. This was the poison that had been furnished to Gerredson in prison.

"If the poison given to Phillip Kassinger and this that was carried to Gerredson in the Tombs were the same, then it would be pretty certain that the poisoner and the slayer of Beatrice Kassinger were one and the same person, and that person a woman."

While he sat looking at the poison, thinking, a thought struck him with the suddenness of lightning.

This paper in which the poison was contained—he had seen it before, and under circumstances that had caused him to take particular notice of it.

Where and when?

"I have it!" he exclaimed. "It is identical with the paper of that mysterious note of warning I received!"

He laid the poison on the table at his elbow, and took the letter from his pocket and looked at it. It was the same kind of paper, a heavy note, unruled, having a pale tint.

"Here is something," he told himself. "The writer of this note and the poisoner were one and the same, no doubt of it. But, the note is supposed to have been written by Gower Terwilliger, while this poison was placed in the hands of Gerredson by a woman."

How could these points be reconciled?

Did it not make it appear the more certain that Mildred Daniels had a hand in it, as she confessed?

It was altogether bewildering, and it puzzled his brain to keep all the points separate and distinct, one from another, while he thought it all over, trying to untangle the whole.

"I'll pay another visit to Gower," he decided. "I must know whether this paper came out of that house or not."

He went straightway, and the door was opened to him promptly.

"I want to see Mr. Terwilliger," he made known.

"He is not in, sir," was told him.

"Then the housekeeper will do. Let me see her immediately."

This was the woman, Mary, whom he had seen before, and she promptly received him.

"There is some writing-paper in the house like this," the Lawyer Detective said, positively. "I want to get some of it. Will you oblige me?"

He held out for her inspection the note he had received.

"Yes, that's poor Mildred's paper, the woman immediately declared. "She has some of it in her room. I see Mr. Terwilliger has used it to write this, for I know his writing."

"You know the writing then?" queried Gale.

"Oh, yes, sir."

"I am glad you told me. I was not sure it was his. Could you show me some of his writing, so that I might compare them?"

"No; I would not dare to do that, sir, in his absence. You had better wait till he comes in. He can't be out much longer, I think. But, I'll get you the paper if you want it."

"Yes, get me a sheet."

She left the room to go for it, leaving Gale almost bewildered.

It was more than he had expected, that he would find this paper here so easily and so promptly.

Here was further proof against Mildred Daniels, as also against Gower himself. But, it

looked impossible that these two could have been in the heinous work together. What was the secret?

Gale ran his eye over the letter while he waited. It did not, really, show guilt against Gower, but, if Mildred was guilty, as she confessed, it did show that Terwilliger had knowledge of it. His purpose had been to protect her in order that he could make use of her to his own interest.

And yet, what of the other facts going to prove her innocent?

He was still puzzling his brain when the woman returned with the paper.

It needed but a glance to show she had not been mistaken; the paper was positively the same as that he had brought with him. Here, then, were proofs not to be denied.

He decided to wait till Terwilliger came.

That was not long after, and the greeting the bulldog Englishman gave him was not flattering.

"What do you want again?" he snarled.

"I have come to have a word with you regarding the note you sent me, sir."

"The note I sent you? I have sent you no note, sir. What are you talking about, anyhow?"

"You know your own writing when you see it, I suppose?"

"It would be strange if I didn't."

"And here is a sample of it."

Gale held up the missive that was in question.

"Eternal sounds!" cried the Englishman. "Where did you get that?"

"Then it is yours, as your exclamation admits. You recognize it at sight. Now, why did you send it to me?"

"But, I have sent you no note, young man. That I'll swear to. Give it here and let me see what it is about, anyhow. No, it isn't my writing, as I see now at a second glance."

"Rather late for you to say so now, after recognizing it as you did."

"But, the paper, I never used paper like that in my life."

"You did so this time with a special object in view. That was, to enable you to deny authorship of the letter, if need be."

"Zounds! Don't I tell you I did not write it?"

"And don't the writing prove that you did?"

"If I wanted to deny it, as you charge, would I not have disguised my hand? Would I take other paper, and then write in my natural hand? Besides, where would I get the paper? No; somebody has been forging my hand."

"The question of getting the paper is a simple one enough, for I have just discovered it is the kind used by your niece—"

"The sly cat! Has she been up to such a trick as this?"

"Here is the paper, just taken from her room, and you can see it is the same. It would have been easy for you to get a sheet of it."

"But I didn't, I tell you! Can't you get that through your thick head yet? I never wrote anything on paper like that, not a scratch. That little she-devil has been forging my hand!"

"You apply a strong name to her."

"Not a bit stronger than she deserves, sir."

"Well, here! read the note, and say why she should write it to me."

"I have to admit that I don't know," the Englishman said, after reading it. "I swear, however, that I did not write it."

"You see," argued Gale, "the writer of this declares belief in the guilt of Gerredson. That does not sound like Mildred Daniels, who loves the prisoner and who has now offered to take his place."

"That's so."

"But here is the paper found in her room, and the writing is so nearly like your own that even you could not tell the difference."

"I am puzzled, puzzled, puzzled. I wish I had never heard of that accursed Kassinger tribe in my life. Nothing but worry and trouble has ever come of it since I have been connected with them."

"And your worst trouble now is that you cannot get hold of the Kassinger thousands."

"What, sir! What!"

"Your last little scheme has miscarried badly. Awsttin has made the worst kind of a flunk of his part, and Peyterson has stepped in and married the girl."

Terwilliger grew purple, clawed the air, and fairly gasped for breath.

"This is what you tried to deny at our last interview," Gale added. "I was not guessing then, and I am giving you cold facts now. Theresa Kassinger is the wife of Theodore Peyterson, and your game in that direction is blocked. The pair were married this afternoon."

"He'll repent it!" Gower cried, in hot passion. "He'll repent it, and so will she! I'll make them sweat, both of them!"

"Why will you do that?" the Lawyer Detective quietly asked. "You denied on your dignity as one of the solid men of this city that you would stoop to anything of this sort."

"You mind your own business," was the savage retort. "If you don't, you may repent it. This interferes with the plans I had laid for

my niece, that's what is the matter, and only that."

"I know it does. You wanted Peyterson's fortune for her, and you wanted to place young Awstin where he could draw upon the Kassinger money-bags for you. Now it appears that you are out all around."

"Curse your impudence!" Gower stormed. "Get out of my house, sir—get out at once!"

"Yes, I will do so, having finished my business."

"And see to it that you never set foot inside of it again, too. You have been making a fool of yourself and of everybody else ever since you got the idea into your head that Bill Gerredson did not kill Beatrice Kassinger. I don't want to see your face again."

"I cannot promise you that you won't, sir, but this interview is sufficient for this time. I have learned more than I have revealed to you, and there may be a surprise in store for you before you are much older. Keep cool, now; I'm going. I would not want to feel that I were responsible, should you go off in a choleric fit. If I have occasion to call again, it will probably be on business that will mean business."

CHAPTER XXVII.

PUSHING STRAIGHT FORWARD.

GALE went to the Tombs, for two purposes.

One was, to see his friend and tell him how matters were progressing; the other, to inquire concerning the still missing under-keeper.

He was now more desirous than ever that this man should be found. It was, in fact, a necessary part of the case, for, if he had seen the face of the woman whom he admitted that night, he held the clue to the whole.

As we know, he did see her face.

Gale had not expected to find his friend, the warden, in, but he happened to be on hand and there was a cordial greeting.

"Have you got hold of that missing man yet?" Gale asked.

"No; but our men have struck his track at last," was the reply.

"That is good, for now he is wanted badly. Gerredson's fate may depend on him entirely."

"He will be brought here, I think you can depend on it as settled. One of the keenest ferrets I know is after him, hot."

Some further exchange, and Gale went in to the cell where Gerredson was confined, an innocent man as the Lawyer Detective so strongly believed—a belief shared by few others indeed.

"Well, are you ready to give up?" Gerredson asked.

"Not by any means," the positive answer. "Light is beginning to dawn, I believe."

"I certainly hope so. But, tell me, have you cleared Mildred yet? Have you shown that it was impossible she could have done the deed?"

"She insists that you are lying, lying to save her, Will. That you saw her face, and rather than see her suffer you will bear the crime yourself. And, proof is appearing against her."

"That is nonsense, John. Did I know who killed Beatrice Kassinger I would tell, let the blow fall where it might. There is no soft sentiment of that falsely heroic sort about me, as you ought to know. No, it is not so; Mildred Daniels is telling a falsehood out of the whole cloth."

"On that we agree, in spite of all, so far. You have told me you did not see the face of the woman who came into your cell that night and left the poison with you, I believe."

"That's right."

"Well, can you say whether she was old or young, by her appearance?"

"I told you she was gone almost before I had time to observe her, but by her movements I would say she certainly was not old."

"You could not recognize the clothing."

"It was too dark to see."

"Was she large, small, short, tall—did you notice?"

"She was about the medium size, as women go, I should say, the brief look I had of her."

"One more: Do you think it can have been Mildred Daniels?"

Gerredson started.

"What has put that into your head?" he asked.

"I could not say that it was, or was not, she."

"There is a suspicion in my mind that it may have been she. That poison was in a piece of heavy note-paper, you remember, and I have found some of the same kind in her room."

"Impossible!"

"The plain and simple fact. That girl is a mystery, and so are all the facts with which she is concerned."

"But, her innocence stands its own proof. She was not the girl to kill any one, no matter how great the provocation. And least of all her own cousin. It must be she is mad."

"Which would be the worse, for cousin to kill cousin or sister to slay sister?"

"Heavens! What do you mean?"

"Do you think it possible that Theresa can have killed Beatrice?"

"My God! no! You hinted at that before. What do you mean? Do you dream of such a thing as possible?"

"Suppose it had been Theresa that was killed,

would you think Beatrice capable of having done the awful deed?"

"No, no, no, John, it is madness to talk thus. What can you possibly find to support such a suspicion? It is madness."

"Think about it, think about it till I see you again, but say nothing. You may be able to recall something that will be of use to me."

"You have taken away all hope of sleep for me for this night, John. I shall torture my brain till morning about this terrible suspicion you have named."

"I'm sorry; but, if that is the case I hope you will torture the truth out of it all. I'll leave you now and let the torture begin. When next I see you I may have news."

"I hope it will be good news."

It had been Gale's intention to go yet again and see Mildred, with the new points he had gleaned, but when he left the Tombs he decided it was too late.

Instead, he went out to the Bowery and bent his steps in the direction of the English ale-house where he had already met with such good success in his newly-assumed rôle.

He wanted to fall in with Awstin *père* if possible, to have a talk with him concerning the resurrection he had witnessed.

Luck favored him, for he was almost the first man he saw on entering.

Gale laid a hand on his shoulder.

Awstin gave a start, looking quickly around to see who had him.

"Good-evening, Mr. Awstin," Gale greeted, pleasantly. "How good is your best health this evening?"

"You have got the best of me, sir," the rough man declared, in something of a startled manner. "My health is good enough though, thank 'e."

"That is good, glad to hear it. So, you don't know me, eh? Well, that is no wonder. I know you, however, and want to have a talk with you. Let's sit down here, and it's my treat."

Hugh Awstin complied, but eyed the detective sharply, suspicious that all was not right.

Gale was now without any disguise, and it was not likely the man would recognize him as the one he had seen there once before.

"In the first place, Mr. Awstin," the Lawyer Detective tried to reassure, "I want to tell you I am not your enemy, and mean you no harm. All I want is a little information."

"Tell me who you are, then. Are you of the police?"

"No, sir; I am a lawyer. My name is Gale. You need have no fear of me; I only want to talk with you, to get some facts which I happen to know are in your possession."

"All right; set your mill to runnin', and we'll see about it, then."

"Well, don't be startled when I begin. I want to learn something about that resurrection you witnessed on the night of the tenth."

Awstin stared at him in wonder, his eyes at their widest.

"What do I know 'bout any resurrection?" he demanded.

"You know something about it, and maybe enough by this time to help me out in the point I am after."

"And what is yer p'int?"

"I want to learn who the persons were who took that body up, and what it was done for. Can you tell me that?"

"I simply can't."

"Because you don't know?"

"That's just it—because I don't know."

"Would ten dollars sharpen up your memory any, think you?"

"I'm giving it to you straight; I don't know who the men was at all. But how did you git onto it?"

"That does not matter. You have the proof that I did, anyhow. Do you think you could find out who these persons were, if I pay you?"

"I ain't promisin' that I could. Don't know how I'd go about it, at this late day. I lost my chance when I didn't foller them that night. If I'd done that, I might have made somethin' out of it."

"It isn't too late to make something out of it yet, if you can only put me on track of them. Tell me about the affair, will you?"

"Yes, I don't mind, seein' that you have got your p'ints straight and know I was there, and the more 'specially as I didn't have any hand in that business. Don't make no mistake on that p'int."

"Oh, I know that; I know you had no part in it."

"All right, then; if you have got that straight, I'll tell you all about it. It ain't much to tell, but it was a good deal to see."

And the man related the facts of the matter substantially as they had taken place.

"Can you describe the men?" Gale asked.

"Yes, in a way. One was a big, tall fellow, in a big cloak, and the other was shorter, with a beard. The short one was the one that done the carving. The other was only a common fellow brought along to do the work."

"You didn't know him?"

"No."

"But you would know him if you saw him again?"

"I might and I mightn't; can't say. I didn't notice him over well, anyhow. I have been kickin' myself ever since for not follerin' 'em."

"Well, Mr. Awstin, will you agree to do me a favor?" Gale finally asked.

"Yes, if it's anything I can do, and there's anything in it," was the conditioned reply.

"It is all right in both respects. If you do, by any means, get on the track of these fellows, will you let me know at once who they are?"

"I will, certain."

"Then it is a bargain. All you will have to do will be to leave word at the office of Hough & Brief," giving their address, "and I will meet you here as soon as I get it."

This the rough fellow agreed to, and while they talked on the younger Awstin put in an appearance.

He was surprised, naturally, to find Gale and his worthy father in company.

"It is all right, young man," said Gale, promptly; "it is all right, old man; we are known all around, and no need to hang back. Sit down, John, and join us in a social draught. There is no reason why we should not be friends."

"May as well be that as anything, maybe better. That other dog is dead, dad, and the jig is up. Shall I speak out before this gent? Well, it is all up; but, if we can only get on the track of that night-job you know about we may not be out of the clover yet. Maybe there is a cinch in it for us, if we can only get onto it in shape."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

GALE MEETS AMAZEMENT.

AWSTIN the father wanted to know what had miscarried, of course, and when the worthy son was assured that Gale was "in it," he made known.

"And that's the very business what brought this gent to me, Johnny," said the father. "There may be wool on the stars yet, if we can help him out and git on the track of these men."

"That's what's got to be done," the young Bowery sport declared. "We are out of it, now, after the secret has gone into other hands; and it puzzles me to know how you got onto it, sir," to Gale. "We'll have to help this gent out, and trust to him for a divvy."

"And I want your help," Gale assured. "It need not matter, as I said, how I got hold of your secret, since you know I have it. I am playing the detective, you know, and if you will play it with me you may render great help in saving the life of an innocent man; for you can rest assured that William Gerredson never killed Beatrice Kassinger, condemned though he is."

"Do you know who did it?" asked Awstin *père*.

"If I did, my work would be done, or nearly so. No, I do not, but I am on the right track, though there is not much light ahead yet."

"How about that suspicion you had, Johnny?"

"Against old Terwilliger?"

"Yes."

"I don't give it up. The way he's fishing for that fortune makes it look a good deal suspicious in his direction. Don't you say so, Mr. Gale?"

"Appearances count for little in this dark and terrible game," the Lawyer Detective made reply. "Look at the appearances against Gerredson. And see how the proof is coming up to support the confession made by Miss Daniels. I tell you, circumstantial evidence is not to be relied on."

"Then you don't believe in it?"

"It is all right to hold a person on it, but when it comes to taking the life of a suspected person on the strength of it, that's going too far."

"Just what I've allus stuck to," averred Mr. Awstin, with vigor. "If you can't get eyewitnesses to a crime, be mighty careful how you go ahead to hang—or execute by 'tricity,' which I hold is worse."

"Then you wouldn't like that, eh?"

"Give me hangin', every time!"

Gale made such arrangements with these fellows as necessary, and took his departure, leaving them talking together.

One thing he desired, now, was to have a strictly private talk with Leonard Kassinger, and late as the hour was, he made his way from the Bowery to the Kassinger residence.

He thought he might find the old man still up, and if so, he would probably be alone, he reasoned.

His inquiry of the butler proved the correctness of his guessing.

Mr. Kassinger had not retired, but was alone in his room, reading and writing. He seldom retired early.

Gale was admitted and greeted cordially.

"I have come for a private talk, sir," the Lawyer Detective made known. "It is upon a matter of serious moment, too."

"And I shall be glad to talk with you," the poor invalid made response. "I am eager and anxious to do whatever may be in my power to aid you in your effort to clear your friend."

"You are still of the same mind, then, that it is possible he is innocent?"

"It has never seemed possible to me that he can be guilty, Mr. Gale. Would that he could be cleared."

It was said despairingly, as though there was no hope.

"There is only one thing that can clear him, Mr. Kassinger. That is, the crime must be placed upon some other person with stronger force than it now rests upon him."

"And that looks like an impossibility."

"It does, truly. But, to the matter that brought me here: Are you aware, Mr. Kassinger, that a terrible suspicion has been breathed against your living daughter? A suspicion almost too terrible to be named."

The old man paled, and his trembling increased.

"Yes, yes, I am aware of it," he answered. "That rascal of a John Awstin had the impudence to breathe it here."

"It is a report that must be silenced at once, Mr. Kassinger. How best can it be done, do you think?"

"I do not think the scoundrel will dare to breathe it further, for we have threatened him with arrest if he does."

"Still, it was he who brought it to me. I did my best, however, to lead him to drop it, telling him it was not safe for him to be spreading such a report. It is just possible he may take my advice."

"Ought we not to have him arrested?"

"That would be to make the matter public. No, the best thing is to disprove it, and make it so plain that the fellow cannot doubt. If that is done, I will take it upon myself to silence his tongue."

"What proof is needed, then?"

"You know in full what has been hinted at?"

"Yes."

"That it is Theresa who is dead, and that this other is Beatrice, playing the rôle of her dead sister, after having murdered her. The twins looked so very much alike that this was possible—that is to say, more correctly, it is made to appear possible, spite of the horror of it all."

"Yes, yes, that is it!"

"But you, the father, could not be blinded."

"Not easily. I have talked with Theresa, upon matters which Beatrice could not possibly have had any knowledge, and there is no doubt."

"Then you did have a slight suspicion?"

"It seemed to me that I did notice some of Beatrice's manners in her, but a close study showed me it was only imagination on my part."

"And now you are well satisfied regarding the matter? It is a heinous suspicion to entertain for a moment, Mr. Kassinger; but we are not doing that, we are clearing it away."

"Yes, I am satisfied. The girls have, in times past, fooled me regarding their identity, in play, but in the earnest of every-day life that would be impossible. No, it is folly to think of such a thing, and that rascal who breathed it had better take care."

"What first put the idea in his head?"

"The scant ideas of fools are not to be accounted for, sir. If you see him, impress it upon his mind that he had better not breathe the thought further, if he desires to keep out of trouble."

"I will do so."

Gale had thus gained the point he wanted, the knowledge whether the father had any suspicion against his child.

He was satisfied that he had not, for Mr. Kassinger was one who could not easily conceal his real emotions or ruling thoughts. There was no longer a doubt in his mind, plainly.

Still, he had a suspicion, sufficiently to lead him to put his daughter to the test. Would that count for anything? Was it possible that this woman could be such an artful thing as this would imply? No, no, it did not look either reasonable or possible.

"Since you have come to me in this way, Mr. Gale," the invalid went on to say, "and since you are disposed to clear the terrible thought away from my child, I will tell you something more."

"And what is that?"

"John Awstin was not the only one—is not the only one who has that thought, or one nearly as bad."

"Ah! is that so?"

"It is so. You recall what you told us about your discovery that the body of my brother had been taken up, of course."

"Certainly; I could not forget."

"Well, we have had a call from the man who did that thing."

Gale's heart gave a leap, but he put on the breaks hard and did not let his excitement be seen.

"Yes?" he said, simply.

"Yes, and a remarkable matter it is, too. I'm going to tell you about it, for you may be able to see further into the thing than I have been able to penetrate. That man was a detective."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; and, strangest of all, he was employed by my dead daughter to do the work. What do you make of this?"

Gale was staggered.

What new aspect was this most wonderful case about to assume?

"I know not what to make of it," he truthfully answered the question. "Can you give me the name of this detective?"

"No, for I did not think to ask Theresa for it. She will know, however, and I'll call her and find out. She has not retired, for she has not been to say her good-night to me."

"No, do not call her, at any rate not yet. Let me know all about this matter first. I am deeply interested. Is it certain that it was your daughter who put this case in his hands?"

"Yes; and there was a strange thing about her manner of doing it. She gave her name as Theresa, and when the man came here to report what he had discovered it was a matter of surprise to my child. Was there ever such a mystery in the world before as this?"

"It is certain that I never came upon one to equal it, sir. What possible object had she to gain by saying her name was Theresa?"

"Impossible to guess. She went to the office of this man some time ago, and engaged his services for the purpose named. She said she suspected Philip had been poisoned, but she wanted the matter kept a profound secret, and it was arranged that the detective should advertise as soon as he had done the work and she was then to go again to his office."

"And he did so advertise?"

"So he said, and getting no response, he came here in person, asking to see Theresa; and great was the shock and surprise to her."

"I can well imagine it."

"So the great question is: Whom did Beatrice suspect? Why did she suspect? That detective scamp hinted at the possibility of my Theresa's having poisoned her uncle, driving the poor child almost mad. He said the police might entertain that theory, if the knowledge came to them. Supposing for a moment it was Gerredson who killed my child, was it he who poisoned Philip? And what were the motives? Have I done right in telling you this? Anyhow, it is done. Can you help us in arriving at the truth of it all?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

MURDEROUS ASSAULT.

HAD John Gale been a veteran professional instead of amateur detective, he might have been able to control his profound amazement at what Mr. Kassinger had been revealing.

He might have been able, but it was almost enough to have betrayed even the most staid and sturdy veteran into committing the unprofession offense of showing surprise. And, as Gale was only an amateur, his face did betray something of the great emotion that stirred him.

And the thoughts, too, which surged upon him, were almost too many, and came too thick and fast for him to handle. Was Mildred Daniels guilty? he asked himself. Was this the secret Beatrice had known? Was it possible Gerredson was telling a falsehood to clear her—No, no! As soon as it came to the integrity of his friend, then it came to something upon which he could build.

What then? Had Theresa killed Beatrice? or was this Beatrice who, having killed Theresa, was living in her assumed identity? Or, was it suicide, after all? If that, how had the crime come to be fastened upon Gerredson? No; suicide appeared to be out of the question; that had been a settled point from the very first. There was no use looking at it in that light. Could it be that Theresa was the guilty one, in spite of all? It did not look reasonable, in the face of her treatment of Awstin when he accused her.

"Why don't you say something?" the feeble old man urged, as Gale did not offer response.

"I am too greatly puzzled to say anything, Mr. Kassinger," was the reply. "This mystery grows deeper at every step."

"It is almost driving me mad."

"Your daughter came to you as soon as this detective had accused her as you have told me, did she? That is what I understood."

"Yes, as soon as she had ordered him out of the house—"

"She did that?"

"Most certainly she did, sir! Would she, innocent, hesitate one moment in that?"

Gale had to admit to himself that it was the natural thing, holding her innocent. And all the appearances, so far as her acts were concerned, pointed to her entire innocence.

"You think she has not retired?"

"I know she has not, sir."

"Will you call her now?"

The invalid touched a bell at his elbow, or rather, the button connecting with a bell, and in a few moments Theresa entered.

She bowed slightly to Gale, stepping promptly to her father's side and taking his hand in her old familiar way.

"What is it, papa?" she asked.

"Mr. Gale has come here regarding that accusation Awstin made, and we have been having a talk."

The girl gave a start before he ended, and looked at Gale in a frightened manner.

"The wretch told you that?" she demanded.

"He did," Gale answered.

"Then he shall be arrested, papa; he shall not be spared longer. I care nothing for what the public may think or say."

She said it with all the fire of aroused indignation.

"No, no, not so fast, my child," the old man spoke rapidly. "Mr. Gale is going to attend to him. He will see to it that the matter is speedily hushed up for us. I have told him about the detective."

The face of the young woman paled instantly.

"Why did you do that, papa?" she cried, in tone not easy to interpret. "You have by so doing exposed the good name of poor Beatrice to suspicion."

"Have no fear, Theresa; Mr. Gale is seeking only the truth, and if this will help him, let him have it by all means. If he can prove the innocence of his friend and put the crime where it belongs, we ought to help him in every way possible."

"Yes, yes, that is true; I was unreasonable in my blind first thought for the memory of the dead. You know what the detective hinted."

"What was that, Mrs. Peyterson?" Gale asked.

"That it might have been Beatrice who poisoned our uncle, and who, thinking she had been found out, or unable to carry the burden longer, took her life."

"But, suicide was out of the question."

"Who was there to see how it was done?"

That question seemed to be a clincher; at any rate Gale did not follow up the same line further.

"By the way," he asked, "will you give me the name and address of that detective, Mrs. Peyterson? I will go and see him, and by having a talk with him I may be able to get at the truth."

"I am sorry, sir," she answered promptly, "but I do not recall what it was. He did leave a card, but I was so indignant that I burned it without looking at it. I do not even recall now what his name was. He was a tall man, with rather a dark face, and that is about all I can give you."

She spoke openly and frankly, and there did not appear reason to doubt her.

"It is too bad," the Lawyer Detective mused aloud. "Finding him, I might be able to clear my friend, even though it fastened the crime upon Miss Daniels."

"That would be horrible!"

"Not to be compared with the horror of the crime. I tell you, no matter where it falls, when I find the guilty person I am going to bring the truth to light. I would not spare my own brother, were he villain enough to endanger Will Gerredson for his own safety!"

He did not speak in a loud tone, but his words were forceful and his manner earnest and impressive.

"A friend worth having," murmured Theresa. "Push on, and may your labors be rewarded. No matter where it falls, bring the guilty one to justice. I cannot think Mildred guilty, though why she should confess it is beyond my power to imagine; but, I cannot speak so confidently about Gower Terwilliger—God forgive me for saying so! I mean, if Gerredson is innocent."

Never had she spoken more earnestly in the hearing of the Lawyer Detective, and her manner impressed him favorably in her behalf.

The matters were talked over quite at length, and the hour was late, indeed, when Gale departed.

His mind was busy as he walked homeward, and he paid little or no attention to his surroundings, merely noting his direction close enough not to go out of his course.

He had proceeded some distance, when a peculiar sound behind him caused him to turn his head quickly, and he was none too soon.

Right upon him was a man, hat pulled down over his face, and in his hand a knife raised for murder!

Just behind the would-be assassin was a tall, dark man, springing forward to the rescue, though he would have been too late had Gale not turned, for the blow was already aimed.

The knife descended, but Gale's turning and now his starting back as it came at him, he escaped the blow, and the force of it almost turned the murderer around.

The next moment the tall man caught hold of him by the collar and gave him a fling that sent him staggering out into the street!

"Why didn't you hold him!" cried Gale, half-angered. "But, I'll have him!"

"My blunder," said the tall man. "But, he can't get away."

He, too, started to run, but in doing so he got in the way of the Lawyer Detective, there was a collision, and both came near to measuring their length on the pavement.

"Confound you for the stupid ass you are!" Gale exploded. "Now that fellow has got away!"

"You ran against me, sir; it was your fault as much as mine."

"You should have held him."

"And get his knife plunged into me. I guess

not. My only thought was to save your life, for which you do not appear to be thankful at all."

"I had cleared the fellow's blow before you came near enough to interfere in any way."

"True; but if I had not made the warning noise that caused you to look around, where would you be now? But, no matter, it is all over and you are safe."

"That puts it in a different light, sir," and Gale offered his hand. "May I ask who you are?"

"Oh, that does not matter at all, sir; we are strangers, and as such we may as well remain; you're welcome to the small favor, I'm sure."

And drawing away, without taking the proffered hand, he started to go.

"Hold on, just a word more," Gale requested. The man paused.

"Did you know that fellow?"

"Certainly not, sir. Do I look like the associate of murderers?"

"Not at all, sir, not at all; still, I thought you might have some knowledge of him. When did you first notice him?"

"Just before he struck at you, sir. I was suspicious of his actions, and at the moment I gave you the alarm I realized what he intended doing. That is all I know, sir; good-night."

And with that, and a wave of the hand, he walked rapidly away.

Gale looked after him for a moment, then turned and started on his way, when something drew his attention.

On the ground at his feet were several bits of paper, as they looked to be, for it was dark just there, comparatively, and he stooped to gather them, finding, on touching them, they were cards.

Taking them all, and making sure nothing further of the kind was to be picked up, he passed on.

As soon as he came where it was light enough to do so, he examined the cards to learn something about them.

They were plain name and business cards, bearing the name of Henry Henry, and stating his business as that of private detective, with the address. Some had only the name alone.

This was something to set Gale thinking.

Of a sudden he started, as a new thought struck him. The detective who had visited Miss Kassinger was a tall, dark man!

"He lied to me!" the Lawyer Detective exclaimed. "He was following me or that assassin, one or the other, for some purpose. He was probably following him, and if so, knew him."

For some minutes he stood undecided what to do, but finally went on his way and entered his lodging.

He had the satisfaction of knowing one thing—or of believing one thing, at any rate: His position in the great murder case had made him dangerous enough to some one to lead to an attempt upon his life. Hence, he reasoned, he must be getting close to the guilty person, and his belief in the entire innocence of his friend was well established—that was, in his mind. He must now have the proofs!

CHAPTER XXX.

AMATEUR ENCOUNTERS PROFESSIONAL.

WHEN the Lawyer Detective left his room the next morning he went forth carefully armed.

He had been carrying a revolver all along, but now it was where he could get at it with the least possible loss of time, in the true Western style, a trick in which he was well versed.

The first business of the day, as planned, was a visit to the office of the detective, Henry Henry.

He wanted to have a plain talk with that gentleman about the case. Through him he must reach the doctor who had made the examination of Philip Kassinger's stomach, an important step.

The hour was early, and he was the first caller at the detective's office of the morning.

As he opened the door and stepped in, he caught just the shadow of an expression of surprise on the detective's face.

"Good-morning, Mr. Henry," he greeted.

"Mr. Gale, good-morning," was the response, civilly given.

"You know me, then?"

"As you have the proof. I saw you at the inquest of the Kassinger murder, and again at the trial of William Gerredson."

"The explanation is simple. I have come to express my thanks for the great favor you rendered me last night, and to have a talk with you on other matters as well, if you are willing."

"Particularly the talk, as I can easily understand. I now know where it was I lost the cards out of my vest pocket. That was an unpardonable blunder for a detective to make, but accidents will happen to the best of us. Now that we understand each other, go ahead."

Mr. Henry spread himself in his chair, one foot on top of his desk.

"What is your honest opinion about this Kassinger mystery, Mr. Henry?" the amateur Lawyer Detective asked.

"I consider it a plain case of suicide, sir, in

spite of all evidence to the contrary. Your friend, Mr. Gerredson, is an innocent man, Mr. Gale."

"Of the latter I have the fullest belief. But, how can you hold it to have been a case of suicide, when expert testimony has been given showing the impossibility of such a thing?"

"Expert testimony is not always infallible, sir."

"You must have a theory, then."

"I have. That knife was in such a position that the dead girl's hand could not have driven it there, but has any thought been given to the fact that she may have cast herself upon its point, against the table or on the floor?"

"Do you hold such a thing possible?"

"Can you say it is impossible?"

It was something Gale had not thought of before.

"And if that is so, then it was she who poisoned her uncle?"

"Which you have learned about from Mr. Kassinger. Yes, I hold it must have been."

"Why did she take her life, then? Was she in danger of discovery, do you have reason to believe?"

"I have no particular reason for believing that, sir. The horrible burden on her soul may have become unbearable."

"Well, admitting that, what is your further theory to account for the terrible fastening of the crime upon William Gerredson in the manner it was?"

"Do you not see? But, this is only guessing, mind you. The fact that the girl killed her uncle shows she must have been in a measure mad. Having come to dislike Gerredson as has been shown, she may have planned all this and carried it out in order to hide her own shame and at the same bring him to grief."

"Then it was all a carefully-arranged scheme, and she smeared his coat without his knowledge, after she was dead—"

"Pshaw! you will not understand. Who can say it was the life-blood of Beatrice Kassinger that was on his coat? She might have put the blood on his coat an hour previously, as it hung in the hall."

"Which may be true. But, has the thought come to you that maybe Theresa is the guilty one?"

"I have considered that, but find it impossible."

"Or, that this living girl may be Beatrice, who, having killed Theresa, now lives in her identity?"

"Impossible again, sir. The deception could not be carried to such perfection as to deceive Leonard Kassinger. He would be the first one to hand her over to justice, for Beatrice was not his favorite."

"Mere thoughts which suggest themselves. Your theory of suicide seems very strong, in the light in which you place it, sir. But, all this has little to do with the real object of my visit. I want to learn from you the name and address of the doctor who examined the stomach of Philip Kassinger."

The professional detective eyed his visitor keenly, without showing any sign of surprise whatever.

"You seem to take it for granted that I had a hand in that," he said.

"I happen to know it, Mr. Henry; no taking for granted about it. I can give you the particulars of that night's work."

"If you think to lead me into an admission of any sort, you are beating the air to no purpose," said Henry, coolly. "I admit nothing of the sort, and were it so, I certainly would refuse what you ask."

"Why should you refuse?"

"Business of that sort would be a professional secret with any honorable expert, and I would be the last to betray him."

"Then my coming here has been in vain."

"Why did you desire to know who this physician was? supposing him to have been a physician, and supposing all the rest to have been as you guess."

"I am guessing at nothing. Do not flatter yourself that you are fooling me one bit in that respect. I know whereof I speak. And as to why I wanted to learn his name, that is a professional secret."

"You pay me back in my own coin. Well, I cannot complain."

"And so our interview comes to a fruitless end for us both. It has been a fencing match between us, and I guess neither has gained any points to boast of. But could we work together, I am sure we could soon solve the riddle."

"Possibly we might, but there are reasons why we cannot work together. I do not want to rob you of any of the honors you may achieve in working the matter out to an ending for the purpose of clearing your friend. I will, however, let fall this hint: Pay attention to the theory of suicide."

"Thank you for the suggestion, but I am more than ever convinced it was not suicide."

"Why, how do you arrive at that conclusion so decidedly?"

"Since we are not working together, sir, I cannot show my hand to you, as of course you cannot expect me to do."

"You believe your friend innocent; you do not believe it was suicide; whom, then, does your suspicion rest upon? Maybe a hint will enable me to help you out."

"As you have refused the kind of help I most needed, I do not require any other sort, Mr. Henry. And now, again thanking you for your service last night, I will take myself off. Good-morning."

"One moment. What makes you so positive that I had a hand in the business of taking up Mr. Kassinger's body?"

"It is an open secret, sir. Let that suffice."

And with that Gale took his leave, having given the professional something to study over.

His effort had been a failure, and he felt not a little chagrined at his defeat. It was some consolation to know, however, that it had been by a professional in this line in which he was only a novice.

Yes, he had been beaten, but he did not give up.

His defeat only served to spur him on to greater efforts to gain the point he desired.

The only man who had the knowledge he desired to gain was this detective, and in order to attain it he must get it from him by some means.

How could he do it?

There was but one way that suggested itself to his mind, and he accepted the suggestion and proceeded to act upon it.

Retiring to a place out of sight he assumed a disguise with which he was forearmed, and came forth to play the shadow upon his professional shadower.

He was not vain enough to think his disguise perfect, he knew very well it was not, and that it would never deceive this man if once his attention was turned upon him fully.

It was his idea, though, to keep in the background, simply to watch.

Sooner or later, he believed, the detective would have occasion to visit this doctor, or the doctor him, and he felt that patience would bring its reward, if long enough exercised.

In his assumed disguise he took up a position where he could watch the office of the detective without danger of being suspected.

Had he been a little later, he would have missed something important.

Only a short time had he been shadowing the office when he noticed a man and woman who approached from the opposite direction.

His attention was drawn to them by his recognition of the man, who was none other than Theodore Peyterson. The woman with him wore a thick veil, but Gale guessed who it was.

Before reaching the building in which the detective had his office, they stopped, and after a moment's talk, parted.

Peyterson lifted his hat and bowed, as though the woman was a respected acquaintance, though he ought to have done the same even were it his own wife—a thing far too unusual, however.

Gale believed it was his wife, none the less, and that this was done merely as a deception.

Peyterson turned into a cross street, and the woman went on and entered the building in which the detective was quartered, and a few moments later Gale saw her through the office window.

The light was just right to favor him, and as he looked she threw up her veil and he recognized her.

It was Theresa Kassinger—now Peyterson.

If ever mortal wished himself a mouse in hiding, it was John Gale just then, but his wish was vain.

There was nothing for him but to watch and wait, for he had come to realize that detectives are not always given favorable opportunities to listen at keyholes, in the threadbare manner of the high-wrought romance.

CHAPTER XXXI.

GLIMPSE BEHIND THE MASK.

If the privilege of knowing what had brought Theresa Kassinger to the office of the private detective was denied John Gale, it shall not be denied the reader.

It was impossible for the Lawyer Detective to transform himself into the fabled mouse, and so overheard, but doors and bars are no barrier against the reader when it is the author's pleasure.

The visitor was Theresa Kassinger—or Peyterson, as Gale was aware.

"I was expecting you," said the detective to her, as she entered, and even before she put up her veil.

"You must have felt pretty certain I would come, sir, according to that. Well, here I am, and your expectations are realized. I have come for a further talk with you."

"Have you found proof of your sister's suicide?"

"No, not yet, but I think we shall, for that idea seems to be strongest in my mind now."

"And, it may be that you have come to get me to help you in the task of establishing the proof to bear out the theory. We ought to be able to do that, somehow, Mrs. Peyterson."

"You feel sure, then, that Gerredson must be innocent?"

"There is no doubt about it in my mind, madam, and the surest way to prove him so is to establish proof of suicide."

"An you will help us to do that?"

"If the pay for the service is sufficient."

"What sum do you consider sufficient, sir?"

"Ten thousand dollars, in good cash money; not a cent less."

The young woman grew pale to the lips.

"You cannot mean it," she gasped. "That is an outrageous price for a simple service."

"That is my price for this service, all the same, and no less. I will, however, make it conditional: You pay me half down, and if we fail to establish the suicide theory, I forfeit the balance."

"Well, I suppose I must accept your terms. Will you take my check for the amount?"

"No; it must be in cash, and in bills not too suspiciously large."

"Very well, since no choice is left me."

"And the further condition is, that this theory must clear the man who is now under sentence of death for the crime."

"It will be for you to take care of that part of it, sir—"

"Not so; the whole matter rests upon you, for no one but you can find and establish the proofs. My business is merely to keep my mouth shut and suggest where you find need of my advice. That is the plain English of the whole scheme."

"But I am sure I cannot get at the proof alone."

"Then pay your money and let me assist you."

"I came prepared for that, sir. I expected your fee would not be small, and I have come provided with the sum needed. Your whole demand is just double what I considered right."

"The buyer has little choice in this world, madam."

"I begin to know it."

She had taken a roll of money from her pocket while speaking, and now handed it to him unopened.

It was accepted and counted, and the detective thrust it deep into one of his pockets, after which he leaned back in his chair, saying:

"Now, madam, your interests are mine. First, let me suggest that you put down your veil again, so that any one opening the door unexpectedly will not be able to see who you are. There, that is better; now we will come to the business in hand."

The man spoke in a low tone, but loud enough for his client to hear.

"You are a woman of nerve," he said, next. "You will require all you can bring to bear to carry you through when once you have set this thing in motion. No one can assist you; you must stand alone. Of course, I am to be your witness for a certain part, but that is all I can do for you."

"Now, let us consider the points: Your sister came to me, privately, and engaged me to undertake the secret taking-up of your uncle's body, for the purpose of examining the stomach for poison. This I did, with the aid of a reputable physician who could do that kind of work, and we learned that Philip Kassinger had been poisoned—that is to say, he was murdered."

"This has to be told thus fully, for my part in it has somehow become openly known, or nearly so. I cannot go back on a single thing I have done or said in the case, and everything else must be made to fit. You can understand that. And so, my part in it, openly, is only as your witness to lean upon. This we learned, as I said, that Philip Kassinger was murdered, by some person to us unknown. Just here let me say the worst person you will have to oppose is this John Gale, who is working to prove the innocence of Gerredson."

"You know of him, then."

"He was here only a little while ago, on this very business. I have laid the foundation upon which to build the suicide story, but he takes very little stock in it, so far. He must be deceived, with everybody else. That is the only thing to be done in his case. Somebody made a foolish attempt to kill him last night—the very worst step that could have been taken. Only for me it would have succeeded, and there would have been the very mischief to pay. That was the very last thing that must be thought of, no matter what the circumstances. The only way to deal with John Gale is to outwit and deceive him!"

"Well, go on, sir."

"Yes, but I must do so carefully. Now, when your sister came to me she came in your name. What her object was in that I cannot guess, further than that she had even then the idea of suicide in mind, and did not want her own identity to be recognized in the matter till all was over. Do you follow me? She wanted to hide her identity till she accomplished her purpose. She had a secret, evidently, but whatever it was she carried it with her to the grave. She took her own life, and the same thing may be proved to account for the death of your uncle. He, for

some reason, took his life. A secret of some kind was shared between them, and it was something that demanded the sacrifice of their lives—"

"Hold on," the attentive woman ordered.

She had been paying closest attention to every word.

"What is the matter?"

"You are going too far. That theory will never work. The double suicide is out of reason, unless the reason for it is given. Philip Kassinger was murdered, sir, and my sister held the secret of that; there is no other way around it. It was for this she took her life. Now, who was it killed our uncle—or, whom did she suspect?"

"Was it possible that she could suspect you?"

"No, that was impossible, for she could have no grounds for such a suspicion against an innocent person."

"Let me see, then, what you can suggest."

"It seems to me I have paid my money for inefficient help, Mr. Henry."

"You know better than any one else what that money was paid for, and what the balance of the ten thousand is to be paid for. You cannot, then, suggest anything?"

"I cannot, sir."

"Then let me take a fresh start. When you interrupted me and told me I was wrong, I thought I would let you set me right. As I said, your uncle's death was plain suicide. Your sister was not sure of it, but she suspected it. She had been the innocent means of providing him with the poison—see? She felt that almost as badly as if she had murdered him. She had to be sure on the point, you know. She paid me five hundred dollars to perform the work for her—you remember you lent her that amount about that time, not knowing what it was for. Every circumstance must be made to fit every other, you understand. No, no, do not interrupt me; I understand your point of objection before you raise it. As she took her life before she had heard from me, you were about to say, she did so without the proof that her uncle had killed himself with the poison she had innocently provided."

"You seem to read my thoughts, sir."

"It is my business to read thoughts and—secrets. But, to explain the important point: On that night she discovered a paper which gave her the knowledge she desired, and knowing her hand had given him the poison, though innocently, she was no longer able to endure the horror of the thought, and so wrote her confession and ended it all. And now we come to the matter of explaining away the circumstances that have combined to bring the crime home to an innocent man. This, at first look, does not seem easy, but let us see. Openly, I have suggested that possibly she did it on purpose, having come to dislike him, but that will not do in this scheme, and the more so as this must be different from anything I have mentioned to anybody. The fact of the matter is, he is innocent entirely, and that is all there is about it. In her written confession, which you are sure to find somewhere in the house, she will mention the dagger, say how she came by it, and forbid emphatically that any suspicion of murder shall attach to any person."

"But, sir, such a confession as that would be found in the most open place in which she could have placed it."

"Certainly; and when you discover it, it will be found to have simply mislodged from where she evidently laid it, falling out of sight. It must not be found stored away like a hidden will or something of that sort. A little study on your part will solve the whole mystery, except perhaps the reason for your uncle's suicide, which is not important. And then people will see how little reliance is really to be placed in circumstantial evidence."

"But what if Gerredson still cannot account for the blood on his coat?"

"And he certainly cannot; he has had ample time to explain it if he would, but he simply cannot. Never mind that point, let it take care of itself. The points raised by his lawyers will have all the stronger bearing, and it will be accepted as the fact that he must have rubbed against blood somewhere without knowing it. It was argued, you remember, that the blood on his coat had evidently been daubed there and not spattered, and there was nothing on the dress of your dead sister to show a similar smear, showing where he had got it. The prosecution, however, disposed of that by saying the appearance was due to his having tried to wipe it off soon after doing the deed. No, no; let his case take care of itself, so far as that is concerned. The letter of confession, in your dead sister's well-known hand, will be all that will be needed to clear him. The matter is very simple, after all, when one sees through it, and Gerredson will be acquitted and people will be sorry they misjudged him as they have done."

"But the other writing that has been found—"

"Will count for nothing, now. The lovers' quarrel was nothing, after all; thousands of worse quarrels can be brought to light, if need be; it would never have been thought of again

but for your sister's suicide and the accidental loss of her written confession, together with the damning evidence that appeared against Gerredson. I foresee no trouble, if you exercise all the care and nerve you are capable of in this matter. If you fail—well, you will be out just five thousand dollars, and will have me for a witness on the other side. My standing is too high for any story of yours to do me harm. I say this to disabuse your mind of any idea of that sort that may suggest itself to you. And this is all. The day the matter is settled, and William Gerredson goes forth a free man, or as soon afterward as possible, you may pay me the balance that will then be due. And you are getting my services cheap, all things considered. A receipt for the money! Mrs. Peterson, pray do not take me for a fool, even though you may be well satisfied that I am a knave. Let me bid you good-morning."

CHAPTER XXXII.

GALE SCORES A BIG POINT.

SOON after the departure of the veiled woman from his office, Detective Henry came forth and walked away down the street.

The Lawyer Detective had not left his post, and giving his man plenty of advance, set out to follow him, with all the care he could exercise. He knew if he once aroused this man's suspicion he could gain nothing.

But the professional had no thought of being followed, evidently, for he did not once trouble himself to look around, pushing straight ahead toward his objective point, wherever it might be—and Gale had little hope that it would be the place he desired to learn, so soon.

In this he was destined to be pleasurable mistaken.

The man finally sprung lightly up the steps of a well-to-do house and rung the bell.

Gale could not turn back, or do anything but go straight on, which he did, at the same time doing his best to carry on the deception he was playing, and he passed the house just after the door had closed behind the detective.

Henry had not looked in his direction, he knew, for the recess of the door had concealed the professional from his view, and he had not stepped back into sight again after going up. And, as said, he had entered when the Lawyer Detective came where he might have been seen.

As he passed the house, Gale glanced at it as any one might casually do, but as he did so a sign riveted his attention.

It was a japanned tin placard on the right of the door, and on it was this wording:

"PAUL KAYSLEE, M. D."

Gale felt like shaking hands with himself, almost, for he was sure he had discovered the man he most wanted to find in this same Doctor Kayslee.

He did not pause, but passed straight on, turned the corner, went around the block, and came up again in the same relative position to the house which he had occupied when approaching.

Let us follow the detective.

He had inquired for Dr. Kayslee, and the doctor greeted him in his office, where he happened to be disengaged at the time.

"Well, Doctor Kayslee, it is all right," the detective cheerfully announced. "I have seen the party, explained the matter, and what we dreaded would be an ugly situation has not so turned out."

"I'm glad to hear that, for the matter has been on my mind not a little. It was terrible, to have that murder come right on top of our night's work—"

"Suicide, doctor, suicide."

"Ha! has it been proven so, then?"

"No; but that's my belief, hard and fast."

"How do you explain it?"

"I don't explain it at all, sir; can't; merely give you my opinion."

And the detective gave the doctor such a view of Kassinger affairs as would best serve his own ends.

"Yes, it does appear as though it may have been suicide, poor child!" the doctor remarked.

"What her secret was will probably never be known. And, the police ought to know of this matter, Mr. Henry."

"The family are going to make it known, shortly. Of course I have held your name back, but if occasion requires we will have to appear and tell what we know. If so, there will be pay for the service, so that need not trouble us greatly, since we have done nothing criminal."

"It was nothing to be proud of, in the manner of the doing of it."

"No matter, my reputation as a detective is your shield, and I am responsible for it all."

"Well, if it becomes necessary, of course I'll give my testimony regarding my share in the work. It is all I can do, and if it will save the life of the young man I will give it most gladly."

"All right; if it comes to that I will let you know. Here is the balance of your pay, which you will find the sum in full agreed upon. Unless you have to testify in the matter, our work is done. And, I'm greatly obliged for the service you have rendered."

And so they parted, and the detective left the house and retraced his steps in the direction of his office.

The Lawyer Detective was strongly tempted to call on the doctor at once, but after thinking it over decided it would not do.

He had no means of knowing what Henry's errand had been, and thought he might spoil his own chances by putting in his appearance so soon, so decided to delay his visit a little.

He had not forgotten his intention to call again on Mildred Daniels, and having made note of the doctor's street and number, set out to pay that visit now.

Mildred was found in a melancholy mood, and with her was Julia Carvingham, acting the part of nurse and companion, so far as the office of nurse was needed; it was more the nature of guard.

There was no sign of recognition between Gale and her, and at a signal from him she withdrew.

"Well, Miss Daniels," were Gale's first words, "the proof in support of the confession you have made is beginning to appear."

She started, paled, but immediately reassumed her melancholy state of unconcern.

"I hope, then, you are ready to believe me," she said, sadly.

"Yes, if some minor points can be cleared away, Miss Daniels, I shall have to believe you."

"And what are these?"

"In the first place, how could Will Gerredson get blood on him in passing you, or you passing him, as you claim, when you positively had no blood on your own clothes? That is one point in the way."

"But I had blood on me; my whole sleeve was smeared with it."

"I happen to know better; you have on the dress now you had on that night, and I have seen and examined the same sack you wore."

"But I—I changed them. That is," in some confusion, "I had on an old sack which I threw away before I went home again. So, you see, you have not made so great a point in my favor."

"Can you prove this?"

"Well, maybe not, but I say it's so, and I'll stick to that."

"Which is not satisfactory, if you cannot prove it. Then, you were not at the Kassinger residence at all that night."

"Who says so?"

"No matter; the fact is well enough known."

"Can you prove I was not there?"

"If your case comes to a trial, I shall endeavor to do so, by showing just where you were that evening."

"But you began by saying the proof of my guilt was beginning to appear. In what manner do you mean? You have not told me anything to show it in that light."

"I have decided not to tell you. I see you are treasuring up every little point, and I guess I will hold these in reserve, for it is not necessary for me to go about seeking your conviction."

"You will have to do that, in order to set your friend free."

"I do not believe it. I hope to free you both, if things work as I now think they will. Why did you not tell me you recognized the paper on which that note was written when I showed it to you the other day?"

"The paper?"

"Yes; you knew it was like paper Beatrice had used."

The girl flushed, then paled, hardly knowing what to say. If she had noticed the paper, she had forgotten it.

This moment of confusion, however, was all the satisfactory evidence Gale got in payment for his effort, for the next moment the girl was ready with her keen retort in support of her story.

"You mean the note you supposed Uncle Gower had written!" she exclaimed with a faint smile. "I wrote that myself. It was on paper such as I use, and such as you will find in my room this moment. Have I not got you now, sir? You thought you had me fast."

Here, though, was his second chance.

"You have not got me very badly," he denied. "You profess to love Gerredson, and you have in this note, if you wrote it, done all in your power to hang him. That is a poor way to show your love."

"You can't understand a woman, and you never will," was the prompt rejoinder to that. "Can you not see that I was angry with him because he did not love me?"

Gale took out his pocketbook, and from it took the small packet of poison he was carefully preserving.

"Then it was you who wrapped this poison in the same kind of paper, was it?" he demanded.

She stared at the powder, and then at him, for the moment speechless.

"You see the paper is the same," he called attention.

"Where did you get it?" she asked.

"Tell me where you left it," his counter-question, imperatively put.

"No, I will not," she refused. "You can see by the paper I know all about it, though."

"Yes, but the paper is not all, this time. Do you imagine you can guess where the remainder of the sheet is from which this piece was cut?"

She stared, wonderingly.

It was enough for him; he was satisfied she had never seen the paper before, as well as that she had not written the note signed Observing Friend.

He had replaced the packet in his pocketbook carefully, and that in his pocket, and now rose to take his leave.

"I am more satisfied than before that you are innocent," he declared.

"Then you are further than before from the truth, that is all," the quick response.

"Your reason for taking this desperate step, Mildred Daniels, was for the one purpose of escaping the persecutions of that rascally guardian of yours."

She looked at him.

"And in addition to that when you became desperate you came to the resolve to attempt to sacrifice yourself and save, if possible, the life of the man you love. You need not tell me I am right; I know it."

"Little fear of my telling you you are right," she answered, sadly. "Death will be welcome, none the less, rather than the fate Gower Terwilliger had in store for me. That, however, does not make me innocent of the great crime I have committed, and for which I must die."

With a few more remarks Gale left her, and outside spoke to Julia.

"She is innocent, Mr. Gale," the girl said, earnestly. "Her mad love for Mr. Gerredson is the secret of her action. But for the hope of saving him, she would have killed herself to escape that devil uncle who has been goading her to desperation. My own regard for Gerredson was nothing as compared with her devotion, and I surrender everything in her favor. I know, now, that I was only blindly charmed and nothing more. This I say to you because you are my friend."

More was said, and when they parted John Gale had something new to think about. The case was beginning to have a double concern for him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DETECTIVE GALE FLOORED.

EARLY in the afternoon the Lawyer Detective set out to pay the important visit to the office of Dr. Paul Kayslee.

His ring at the bell was answered by a trim-looking colored youth, who showed him into the doctor's office, where two or three patients were waiting to have their ills attended to.

There was an inner office, and presently the door of that opened and a woman came out.

A moment later a mild, bearded face appeared, the owner saying;

"Now, next in turn, please step in here."

A man rose in response to the call and went in, and this was repeated until at length Gale was the only one there.

"Now, sir, what can I do for you?" asked the doctor, coming out and addressing him in the reception-room, seeing that he was the only one of the batch left.

"I have not called as a patient, sir," the Lawyer Detective answered, "but on a little matter of business."

"Ah! Very well, sir, I will hear what you have to say."

"You are Dr. Kayslee?"

"Yes, sir."

"I wanted to be certain on that point. You are considered something of an expert in the matter of poisons, I believe."

"I am occasionally called upon to analyze, sir. I am, besides doctor, an analytical chemist. Is there something in this line you want me to do for you? If so, I'll be glad to serve you."

"I have here a small quantity of poison," said Gale, taking out his pocketbook, "which I want you to name. It is no trifling matter, but one of greatest importance. I say this, so that you may, if necessary, put it to the closest test."

He had now taken out the small packet, which he delivered into the doctor's hand with extreme care.

"The man and manner convince me there is something important at stake, sir," the doctor said, "and I will make doubly sure I am right before I speak."

He rose to go into the inner room.

"May I accompany you, sir?" Gale asked, also rising. "It is important that I should not lose sight of this powder for a moment. It may be called into question if I do."

"Yes, you may come in, of course, sir. Your serious manner leads me to ask if you are not a detective?"

"I am a lawyer, sir," Gale explained.

They passed into the office proper, the doctor still talking; and, making ready for the tests, the work was begun.

At the first test a look of disappointment came over the doctor's face—a look that deepened when the second test had been applied, and aloud he muttered:

"Well, I am fooled, at first. I took it for a simple poison, but if it is a poison at all, it is something beyond that. I will test for something different, as I have the means ready at hand. It is hardly likely it can be that, however."

Clearing the deck for action again, so to speak, he applied a further test, and immediately an exclamation escaped him.

"Is it possible!" he cried. "I am amazed. I had occasion to test for this very poison not a long time ago, which accounts for my being prepared for it. This drug is—"

He named it—a most powerful poison, indeed; one not commonly known.

"Now, sir," Gale further requested, "will you take a small portion of this and put it in another packet, and carefully preserve it, marking both packets so that you can identify them again under oath, if necessary, and also provide me with a written certificate of analysis?"

"Why, sir, it seems to be more than usually important."

"And it is. Do not be anxious, it is in an honorable cause, and your pay is ready for you."

"Don't mention the pay," the doctor waived, disdainfully. "If the matter is honorable I'd serve without pay, if need be. Yes, I'll do as you ask, sir, as you are clearly in deep earnest."

"I was never more in earnest. It is a matter of life or death."

The work was done quickly and well, and the doctor then sat down in his chair and leaned back, asking:

"Now, sir, are you willing to tell me something about this matter?"

"I have one more question to ask first," responded Gale. "Upon your answer to that will depend everything."

"Well, sir?"

"Is this poison, Doctor Kayslee, the same as that you found in the stomach of Mr. Philip Kassinger, which you examined not long ago?"

The doctor gave a great start, looking at his visitor wonderingly.

"What do you know about that?" he demanded.

"I know all about it, sir," was the reply.

"Please answer the question, and I will then explain further."

"Tell me, first, who you are."

"My name is John Gale."

"Ha! you are the lawyer who is working to clear Mr. Gerredson of that crime of murder."

"Yes, sir."

"Who directed you to me?"

"Well, your question is prudent, sir; I learned of you through Detective Henry Henry."

"That is enough, sir; that is enough. I will tell you everything you want to know. Yes, this is the same poison that was found in the stomach of Philip Kassinger. There is enough here to kill forty men."

"How much of it was found in his stomach?"

"Nearly half as much as you have in this packet."

"A small quantity would have done the work as well?"

"Even with better effect."

"Then the person who gave it evidently knew little about it, save that it was a deadly poison?"

"So it would appear."

"Now, can you tell me where such poison can be bought? I want, if possible, to learn where this was procured."

"It is in the stock of any strictly first-class chemist, sir."

"Has it a common name?"

"It is sometimes called ____."

"Would it be given to a person asking for it without prescription?"

"Very probably not, unless that person was known and could give a good reason for wanting it."

"That is all I will trouble you with now, Doctor Kayslee. I may have occasion to call on you again, and anyhow you will be called as a witness when the time comes to have the matter sifted out."

By this time some patients had again gathered in the reception-room, and after a few passing remarks further Gale took leave.

He was highly elated over the success he had won.

And, too, he could not but wonder what would be the amazement of Detective Henry when he learned the use he had made of his name.

Gale had told no lie; he had indeed learned of this doctor through Mr. Henry, but the professional detective was entirely without any knowledge of having imparted the information.

Now, the next move?

Gale thought well, and decided to follow up his success by trying to make it the more complete.

Reassuming his slight disguise, he made his way to the neighborhood of the Kassinger residence, taking note of the drug-stores in that vicinity.

He entered the one nearest the house.

There he asked for the drug the doctor-chemist had named, but was told it was not in stock.

"Do you know of any one near by who does keep it?"

"No; it is expensive and seldom called for. You can probably find it over at De Moro's, on Fifth avenue; but it is doubtful whether you can buy it or not."

"I do not want to buy; I want to inquire concerning some that has been sold. I suppose you know of Dr. Kayslee?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, I have gotten some information from him, but not enough; I must learn where a certain purchase of the drug was made. I will drop around to De Moro's and inquire there."

"You may be able to learn what you want to know."

Gale did not go there immediately, however, but made about the same inquiries in the other stores in the neighborhood, with more or less unsatisfactory results.

Finally he set out for the place to which he had been directed, feeling that he was but fooling away time to no end, thinking there he would be more likely to gain something definite.

On his way he passed the window of a dingy-looking drug store, over which was the sign—"Deutsch Apotheke."

He had gone some distance when the thought struck him that he was throwing away a possible chance of learning something, since this shop was on a direct route from the Kassinger residence to the avenue.

Still he went on, till at last the thought so impressed him that he stopped short and went back.

Gale could talk German fluently.

He said, in that language, he had dropped in to learn the name of the party to whom a quantity of the drug in question had been sold about a couple of months before; speaking as though he knew such a sale had been made.

"Yes, I did sell some about that time," the "apothecary" acknowledged. "I did not have it in stock, and sent out to get it, the reason I remember. It is a thing seldom called for, owing to the expense."

"To whom did you sell it?"

"I can tell you that in a minute, sir; just let me get my book."

Gale's heart was beating with more excitement than the cold-blooded detective ought to allow, but he could not help it.

"Yes, here it is," the man presently announced. "It was over three months ago. It was sold to a Mrs. Carvingham, of West —th street. She bought it to kill a large favorite dog of which the family had become afraid."

John Gale was so taken aback that he knew his face must betray his amazement. He had been fixing his attention solely up in the Kassinger family now, and here the proof was turned suddenly against the very house in which he had taken lodgings. How was he to understand it? What could he make of it? He was nonplussed.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

VICTORY ALMOST ASSURED.

THE Lawyer Detective thought for some moments before speaking further.

All his former suggestive suspicions against this woman or her daughter came back to him with renewed force.

The dagger taken from Gerredson's room, the chance to put blood on his coat was there perfect, and here now the fact that she had bought the very poison which had killed Philip Kassinger.

But was there no room for doubt?

"Was this woman known to you?" he asked the druggist.

"She was not," was the answer, "but I found her name in the Directory, and so believed her story."

"Could you describe her?"

This was done, and Gale had to confess it was not unlike the daughter, Julia, though the description was not in detail.

Thanking the druggist for his kindness, and letting fall the hint that there had been at least an attempt to use the poison for another purpose, Gale left the place and turned his steps homeward.

One point he could not understand.

Why had Mrs. Carvingham, or Julia—as it more likely had been—why had she come so far from home to get the poison? She must have had some knowledge of the place, or perhaps had tried every other store in vain.

The old druggist had admitted that the woman had not asked for that drug in particular, but had told the story of the pet dog and asked what would be the quickest and least painful poison to give it, and he himself had suggested the —. And, he had directed how to give it.

Further, Gale had been particular to ask if he would be able to identify the woman, should he see her again, and the man was positive he would know her at sight, no matter where.

There had been nothing nervous or excited about the customer, he explained, and her story had been simple and straightforward. She had not used German, but English, in talking with him.

All of which points the Lawyer Detective stored away carefully for future reference.

Reaching home, he rapped at the door of Mrs. Carvingham's sitting-room.

She was there, and bade him come in.

"What became of that big dog you used to own, Mrs. Carvingham?" he asked, after some passing remarks:

"A big dog! Why, sir, I never owned a dog in all my life."

"Did you not, on March twelfth, buy poison to kill a big dog with?"

"No, positively. What are you getting at?"

"Are you willing to go with me to the shop of a Dutch apothecary on — street, to see if you can identify a signature on his book?"

"I am, sir, perfectly willing."

"Very well. I will go and bring your daughter, for this is a matter of deepest concern. Say nothing to a living soul about it, but be ready to go with us when I return."

She promised, and Gale hastened on.

When he confronted Julia he promptly and seriously demanded:

"For whom did you buy that poison on March twelfth, at the little drug-shop on — street?"

Her look was one of such genuine amazement that he could not for a moment doubt her innocence.

"Why, I never bought poison in my life for any purpose," she declared, most emphatically.

"You are quite sure?"

"I will swear to it, if you desire."

"No, I will not ask you to do that, but you must come with me to that shop and see if you recognize the handwriting of a certain signature on his book."

"Which I will do cheerfully, for I would not have such a suspicion as you have named rest upon me."

She was quickly ready, and stopping on the way for her mother, in due time the Lawyer Detective conducted them into the shop of the druggist where the suspicious purchase had been made.

"Will you show me that book again, friend?" he requested.

"Yes, with pleasure," was the ready compliance.

It was opened to the place where the signature was, and Gale called the attention of mother and daughter to it.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mrs. Carvingham, in a startled manner. "My own name and address, as I live."

"Why, mamma, when and why did you ever come away up here?" demanded Julia.

"Is that my writing?" the mother demanded.

The daughter looked more closely, and promptly decided that it was not. It was nothing like her mother's hand.

This, however, was not Gale's point, and he now asked the apothecary if he could identify either of these as the one who had bought the poison of him, and he was positive in his statement that neither was the person.

Gale drew a breath of relief.

This proof served, now, to convince him the more thoroughly that his other suspicion was correct.

The three left the shop and turned their steps homeward, Gale having first told the druggist he would probably call again to see him, and as they walked to the nearest cars, Gale said:

"Well, you are both cleared, and promptly, too, of this suspicion which has been directed toward you. Whoever it was bought that poison, it was some one who knew of you and your house, Mrs. Carvingham, and I think I can now place my finger upon the very person."

"Who was it?"

"I dare not reveal the name, yet. It is bound to come out in a short time, now, and it will be a sensation, I promise you."

At the cars he left them, taking his way once more toward the Kassinger residence.

His every movement, now, had to be a study.

A little mistake on his part might give rise to suspicion, and make his chance for success the more difficult.

It had been a matter of study to guess who it was had made the attempt on his life, but now he believed he knew, and seeing everything in the new light, the whole matter was plain.

The visit of Theresa Kassinger to the office of the private detective was significant.

He knew not what had been said there, but he suspected a good deal. She had once ordered him out of the house, highly indignant, and here she sought him at his office, secretly.

The Lawyer Detective believed he was on the right track.

Before he reached the Kassinger home he changed his mind about going there, and altered his course.

He would, he decided, let matters take their own way for a time, while he awaited the arrest of the runaway keeper from the Tombs, who might be the holder of so important a link in the chain of evidence.

With this uppermost in mind, he went to the Tombs now.

No, the fellow had not been heard from further, but something definite was expected at any moment.

Gale expressed the hope that it might be speedily realized, and went in to the cell where

his friend was wearing away the weary hours of his terrible confinement, uncertain of his fate.

"I am glad you have come," was the greeting. "I have not had an easy moment since I saw you last."

"Why, how is that?"

"Thinking about what you said at parting."

"I had reason to believe it would keep your mind busy till I came again."

"The thought has not left me for a moment, and, terrible as the idea is, it has grown upon me till I cannot shake it off."

"I am now well assured it is the truth."

"Then you have made further discoveries?"

"I have. Would that I had a photograph of Beatrice Kassinger, but I dare not take the risk of trying to get one. I must wait patiently and abide my time."

"Hal I believe I can help you out, there!"

"You have one?"

"No; but I know who has, and that is John Awstin."

"Ha! Excellent!"

"She gave it to him to anger me, and I suppose the rascal has it yet; there is scarcely any doubt about it."

Gale talked with his friend for some time, giving him the particulars of what he had been doing and what he had accomplished, and finally went away, leaving the poor prisoner greatly encouraged.

He had ere this learned where to find young Awstin at almost any time, and in less than an hour he found him.

"I want a favor of you," he said.

"What's that?"

"I want you to lend me the photograph you have of Beatrice Kassinger."

"You detectives beat the deuce for finding out things. I won't try to deny it, seeing there's no reason I should. Come to my lodging, and it's yours."

They set out, Gale talking freely, as it seemed, but at the same time guardedly, and in due time the prize was in his possession.

As he looked at it, he could swear it was the picture of either girl, as thought might for the moment direct. If Beatrice, it was Beatrice; if Theresa, then it was she—that was, her likeness.

It was late in the day when he next presented himself at the shop of the apothecary where the poison had been bought.

"Back again!" he was greeted in surprise.

"Yes, and with another woman for you to identify," was the reply.

The druggist gazed at the door, as if expecting somebody else to follow in, and Gale smiled.

"No, she is here in my pocket," he said.

He drew out the photograph and gave it into the man's hand.

"That's her!" the apothecary cried, with more force than grammatical correctness. "That's the very woman who bought the poison!"

Gale almost trembled in his suppressed excitement. Victory was now his, he knew. Only one thing more, to learn positively whether it was Beatrice or Theresa that was dead, and his friend's innocence would be established. But how carefully must he handle the case now! Not a dream of suspicion must be aroused.

CHAPTER XXXV.

VILLAINY OVERDONE.

WHEN John Gale went home to his lodgings for the night, after the excitement and work of the day, another surprise awaited him there.

It was in the form of a letter from Hough & Brief, under a special-delivery stamp, and it called for his presence at the office at ten in the morning sharp.

The Kassingers had discovered new and important evidence, was stated, and were to be there at that hour to present the facts. It was believed it would clear their client.

Here again Gale was all at sea.

It was a long time before he could fall asleep, and, when he did, it was to dream fitfully that the whole affair was only a huge joke, after all, and that no crime had been done.

Bright and early he was up, and was at the office long before the hour appointed.

"We had no doubt about your being here early enough for a chat before the others come," said Mr. Hough, in greeting.

"What in the name of mystery is in the wind now?" Gale eagerly asked.

"A written confession has been found, proving that the case was one of suicide, after all."

"Impossible!"

"So it seems to us, but that remains to be seen. There must be something in it, or their first concern would not be to save Gerredson, as their coming direct to us goes to prove."

"I'm staggered," Gale had to admit. "I have been working like a beaver, and had another theory almost proven, as I thought. I have always said circumstantial evidence is the most treacherous thing in the world, and I'm more convinced of it than ever before."

A few minutes after ten came Mr. and Mrs. Peyterson, together with Jadson, the Kassinger-housekeeper.

Theresa carried in her hand a folded letter, upon which she seemed to have taken a grip that was not to be broken easily. The letter was something, evidently, she did not care to lose.

She spoke to Gale, offering him her hand, and all took seats.

"You are here on the matter of business mentioned in your important note of yesterday, of course," said Mr. Hough.

"Yes, sir," answered Theresa. "As I told you then, we have found a written confession, in my dead sister's writing, and here it is."

She handed over the letter as she spoke.

"Where was this found, madam?" the lawyer asked.

"It was found where it ought to have been discovered on the very morning of the discovery of poor Beatrice's body, sir. She evidently had placed it on the table, but it somehow became dislodged and dropped into a crack and fell down into the hollow upper support where the legs join."

"And you claim it ought to have been discovered there that morning?"

"I meant, sir, it ought to have been found on the table, had it been where she clearly intended to leave it."

"That crack must be a wide one."

"It is, sir. It is where the table joins, and as the table is old it is seldom closed. I have seen it so wide apart that I could put my finger in. A shock will jar it open easily."

"And who found the letter?"

"The housekeeper, Jadson, here. She and I were in the room, and she was dusting. When she came to dust the under part of the table, she found it, and drew it out and gave it to me."

"Was this the first time the room had been dusted since the tragedy?"

"Yes; it was the first time for a general sweeping, sir. Things have been all disarranged since the awful time of the inquest. We had no heart to do anything at all, till forced to it."

"The explanation is satisfactory, being all in reason. Now, let us see what the confession has to say. I suppose it can be shown that it is in her writing beyond any doubt?"

"That is easy to prove, sir. Any quantity of her writing can be produced for comparison. There is no doubt. If there was, I would be the last one to bring shame upon her memory."

She wiped her eyes as she said this.

Mr. Hough had now taken the letter from its envelope, and he proceeded forthwith to read it out aloud.

It ran thus:

"DEAR PAPA AND THERESA:—

"Can you ever forgive me for what I am about to do? I cannot bear the horror longer, so must end my life. I am innocent of any wrong, but the terrible secret I carry is eating my heart away. God forgive me for my deed when it shall have been carried out! By my hand, innocently, Uncle Philip was poisoned, and I feel as though I were really guilty of murder, for it was I who procured the poison for him. I wish I could die without the shame of confessing suicide, but that I dare not do, lest the crime be thought murder, and some one be suspected of the deed. Leaving this confession, I have no fear of us using the dagger with which you will find my rash deed to have been done. I took it from Mr. G.'s room one day when I called, and he was out. He will see how little I care for him when he finds the base use I make of it! I procured the poison for uncle innocently, he telling me what to buy, and where to buy it, but when his death followed immediately afterward, then I suspected, and set out to learn the truth. I employed a detective to take the body up and have it examined. This, Theresa, will account to you for the use I made of the money I borrowed. Shortly after I had seen the detective, though, I found a written word of confession from uncle to papa, and knew what I had done. Oh! it almost crazed me! I cannot carry that secret and live! So, I bid you good-bye. I do not know why uncle killed himself, but I suspect it was owing to his ill health, for you know he brooded over that a good deal. I can say no more; I have no more to say. Good-bye to you and to the world. I have not been happy, for it is my nature to be otherwise, I think, and if I can only sink into nothingness, and never more realize being, that is all I ask. Forgive me if you can, and keep this letter and the knowledge of uncle's shame from the public, if possible. No one can be suspected. By my own hand I die."

"BEATRICE KASSINGER."

"P. S. The detective will discover the truth, and if he comes to the house, as he will when I do not keep my agreement with him, give him money to keep secret what he has learned."

B. K."

As he concluded reading, the lawyer folded the letter, looking around at the others present while doing so.

"You will leave this letter in our hands?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," the young woman answered. "It must be used to clear Mr. Gerredson."

"Yes, it must be used for that. It is more

strange than ever, if possible, how that blood came on his coat. Can you account for it, madam?"

"I cannot, sir. I think now he has told the truth, and that he does not know how it came there. He must have rubbed against something with blood on, and without knowing it."

"That must be it, for it is clear enough now that he is innocent."

"There is no longer room for doubt."

"What do you think, Mr. Gale?"

"This letter is the very best thing that could have happened," the Lawyer Detective declared emphatically. "My friend will now walk forth a free man, and the world will see how it has misjudged him."

"And I will testify in his behalf only too gladly," Theresa declared. "I am glad the truth has come to light at last, and you have only to call upon me when I am wanted. I am glad the truth has been learned before it was too late. If it had only been found as Beatrice intended!"

There was further talk among them all, congratulations all around, and when the party left the office it could be seen they were in better spirits for having performed a duty in simple justice to an innocent man.

John Gale waited until he saw them on the street before he said a word, and then, turning to Mr. Hough, he cried:

"Guard that letter as the apple of your eye, Mr. Hough! It is the best bit of proof I could have got hold of! Take the proper steps to put it in evidence at once, and meantime I'll go on with my work."

"You don't believe in it, then?" asked Hough, in some surprise.

"Believe in it! Why, sir, it stamps itself the rankest bit of rascally forgery I ever heard of."

Forthwith, then, Gale let him into the secrets he had discovered, and never was man more amazed. It was too unreal to be true, and yet the proof was there to support it.

"Have no fear of my losing the letter, sir," he promised. "I will be its guardian day and night until you have accomplished your work. The end is not far off, now."

"Why has this letter appeared at this late date?" Gale questioned.

"Have you forgotten her visit to that detective?"

"No; do you suppose he has had anything to do with it?"

"What you have told me of his visit to the house goes to prove that he knows the truth."

"And you suspect—"

"That his silence has been bought, but that he would not agree to keep the secret unless Gerredson could be freed. He would not have any part in taking a life by holding his tongue."

"I believe it must be as you say, sir. I'll have them, one and all. You go on as though nothing was suspected, and I'll attend to springing the trap that will be death to them. Yet, spite of all the proof we have, it does not seem possible it can be so."

When Gale went out he went straight to the Tombs.

His friend the warden had good news for him. Word had been received that the runaway had been caught, far in the West, and was being brought back again a sadder if not a wiser man.

At this Gale was overjoyed, almost.

Everything seemed to be playing into his hands, now, and the outcome looked certain.

It was with a light heart he went into the cell where Gerredson was as patiently as possible awaiting the result of his efforts in what had at first looked like an impossible task.

The light on Gale's face cheered him, even before he had spoken a word.

"What is it?" he eagerly asked.

"The game is ours," Gale answered. "We have only to set the trap and take it in."

And he told what more had taken place since their last interview.

"Now," he proceeded to ask, when done, "think well, and tell me if either Theresa or Beatrice had a distinguishing mark of any kind, that you ever heard of."

"I have heard that spoken of, John, and have heard it said that neither of them had."

"That is bad, for I hoped something of the kind could be shown."

"If it were only a romance, now, so that the strawberry birthmark could be shown on the pink-and-white shoulder-blade—but, that is always in story."

"Well, never mind, when that runaway jailer is brought back he will, I hope, be able to identify the woman who brought you the poison, and if so, that will be all the proof we shall need. That is, if he saw her face, and there's the rub."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

COMPLETING THE CIRCLE.

THE Lawyer Detective left the Tombs with the fact firmly impressed upon him that the question of identity was going to be a serious one.

In either event, the living sister was in

a bad situation in her relation to the crime that had been done, but he must be able to show whether or not the living one really was Theresa.

How was this to be accomplished?

He bethought him of John Awstin once more. He had known the young woman well, and something of this kind might have been told him.

Awstin was found in one of his usual haunts, and was eager to learn all that had been developed in the matter, but, afraid to trust him with anything really important, Gale told but little.

"But, you wanted to see me for something, that's certain," Awstin rightly guessed.

"You have hit it straight," Gale admitted. "I want to ask you if you ever heard of a distinguishing mark on either Theresa or Beatrice by which the one could be positively identified."

"By George! you have made me think of something that would be of use, if it came to a question of identity."

"What was that? Give me the particulars, and in payment I'll give you, in a day or two, the liveliest sensation you ever heard of in your life. I have it in part now, but then I'll have it all."

"Well, it came of Beatrice's fondness for cycling. She and I used to go out frequently last year, that is to say, as frequently as I could steal her away from Gerredson and others, and one day she met with an accident. Her wheel ran away with her down the side of a bank—it was out in the country, you understand, and she ran into a wire-fence."

"What can that have to do with the point in question?"

"The wire was of that infernal barbed kind, and as she fell against it one of the barbs caught the underside of her right arm, cutting a gash almost from elbow to arm-pit. If it did not leave a scar it is funny. We had to go to the nearest doctor and have it dressed."

Gale gave his hand to the fellow, thanking him for this, and, bidding him hold a still tongue for a time, hastened off to another quarter.

He went now to see Mildred Daniels.

"Another question to trouble you with," he said, having drawn her aside so as to speak in private.

She was in the same state of mind as before, evidently determined to play her rôle to the end, desperate enough, in her desire to escape her uncle, to accept whatever came to her.

"What is it?" she asked.

"About that cycling accident your cousin Beatrice met with last summer. Do you remember it?"

"Yes, quite well. It about cured her of her fondness for that sort of thing, for she gave it up almost entirely after her arm got well."

"Do you know whether that cut left a scar or not?"

"I know it did. There was a little white, thread-like line nearly the whole length of the under part of her right arm."

"That is all, and I am greatly obliged to you for the information. I suppose you still insist that you are guilty of killing her?"

"If you can prove to the contrary, do so; until you do, I am guilty of the crime."

The Lawyer Detective smiled, and went away.

Now he had something upon which to work—something that would give him the desired proof!

Without loss of time he obtained from the police and other proper authorities the right to open the grave of Beatrice Kassing in Greenwood, and, so armed, went thither, taking proper and competent witnesses with him.

The work done need not be described in detail.

Both arms of the dead girl were examined critically by every person of the party, particularly the right one, but not a seam or scar was anywhere visible!

The Lawyer Detective was now in possession of proof positive for what he had suspected, and to establish which he had worked so persistently, and, so armed, could now go ahead toward an ending.

But he could afford to wait a little.

If the evidence of the runaway jailer could be had—that is, if he had seen the face of the woman who had bribed him, that would make his case so much the stronger and the confusion of the guilty wretches all the more confounded.

The confession that had been discovered was kept no secret; the papers got hold of it, and the persons who came up ready with their "I told you so!" were legion.

But the end was not yet.

It was a couple of days longer before the runaway jailer was brought back, and Gale was promptly notified of his arrival.

The arrangement had been that he should not be questioned regarding the mysterious woman until Gale could have the opportunity of being the first to put the questions.

"This is the fine fellow we have been looking for," the warden said, by way of introduction.

"So, you are the runaway, are you?" Gale greeted him. "Did you have time to spend all the money the woman gave you?"

"There wasn't no woman, nor nothin' of that kind," was the stubborn growl.

"Oh, but we know better than that," Gale declared, smiling. "We have proof for all that. We want to know what you did with her body after you killed her for the rest of her money—"

"Good heavens!" the fellow gasped, pale as death. "I didn't kill her! I never seen her after I let her out, and I didn't go till a good while afterwards. I don't know the least thing about her; that I'll swear to."

"Maybe it wasn't the woman we think," Gale observed, aside to the warden.

"It is possible," the warden agreed.

"And if that's the case, of course this fellow can't be held for murder. My man, did you see her face?"

"Yes, yes!" was the eager answer. "I seen her face in the moonlight where it came in at the window by the steps next to that fellow's cell. I seen it plain, when her cloak fell back."

"And she was an elderly lady, very dark and quite wrinkled, with—"

"No, no, no!" the man hastened to correct. "She wasn't nothin' of that kind at all, sir; she was young, and pretty, too."

"You are sure about that?"

"Yes, I am. She did have white hair on, though, or somethin' white on her own hair, in front, but when I seen her face I knew she was young."

"Would you know that face if you saw it again?"

"You bet I would!"

"See if you find it among these photographs, then."

The Lawyer Detective had procured a couple of dozen of photographs of women, among which he had put the one obtained from young Awstin, and these he gave into the prisoner's hands.

The fellow ran them over rapidly, till he came to the one of Beatrice Kassinger, when he stopped short.

"That's her!" he declared, holding the picture up.

"Get out!" cried Gale. "Impossible! You are clear off now, my man."

"That's the one," the fellow insisted, emphatically. "Didn't I pick it out on sight? Don't you suppose I know what I know?"

"What better proof do we want?" Gale asked, turning to the warden. "You are my witness to the test in the matter, and to the promptness with which the fellow has made his selection."

"It is all that can be desired," the warden assented.

"And you will hold the fellow as a witness, of course."

"He will be held; never fear."

"But, it ain't no murder job, is it?" the man asked, in fright. "Cause if it is, I ain't in it, that I'll swear to."

"No, you are all right, my good fellow," Gale assured. "You are only held on the bribery charge, and as a witness on another case. You will be required to tell in court what you have told us here."

"All right, all right; if that is all it is, I don't care; but if it was anything like murder, then I wasn't in it."

"It is nothing like that; the worst that can happen to you will be on the bribery question."

The prisoner was locked up, and Gale took the opportunity to tell Gerredson how complete the chain had been made.

From there he dropped around to the office of Hough & Brief, where his face told its own story before he had need to say a word about what had been accomplished.

"Well, the thing is done," he gladly announced.

"Have you been able to cover every point?" asked Brief—Mr. Hough was out.

"Every one, sir. Not a thing has been left undone. The circle is perfect, and that beautiful monster cannot escape."

"But how about Detective Henry? Have you thought that he ought to be entrapped, too, if he is concerned in this thing in the manner we think? Mr. Hough and I have been talking it over."

"In my one object to clear Gerredson, I admit I had almost overlooked him. What can be done?"

"If guilty, he must be taken with the rest."

"Most assuredly."

"But, if a rascal, he is a wily one, being a detective, and no doubt he has taken means to forestall his exposure if anything miscarries in which he is concerned. He must be taken red-handed."

"What is his reputation?"

"Scaly, but he has never been trapped at any of his tricks. If you can do it, you will put a feather in your cap."

"What conclusion have you and Mr. Hough reached?"

"This: that we take the prosecution in with us, and show our hand and have Gerredson set free. That the first step. If Henry is in the villainy, it is only to win a reward for holding his tongue, which he will probably not do unless Gerredson is saved from the chair."

"I see, sir, I see, I see. If guilty, he will probably come in for a reward when his plans

have been brought to success. I have no doubt, now, but he was the promoter of this letter of confession. It came out, you notice, shortly after the visit of the young woman to his office."

"You think the same as we, sir. If he is guilty, he must be trapped, and the only way to do it is to lull him to sleep and then pounce down upon him when he isn't expecting anything of the sort. And you are the man to do it, as you have proved."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SPRINGING THE SURPRISE.

ALL of one accord, the lawyers and the courts speedily adjusted the matter of William Gerredson, and he was pardoned, or exonerated, and let go free.

The same with Mildred Daniels, who when it was so clearly shown that the case had been one of suicide, confessed that she had played the part merely to escape, in her desperation, the persecutions of her uncle.

She had little cared what became of her, and if she could save the life of him she loved she was willing to do it. She had the idea that her simple confession would be accepted without question, and that she would be put in the dismal Tombs cell and he would be liberated.

Now, the man Peyterson having married, she had nothing to fear in that direction, and Gower Terwilliger had received a hint from competent authority that he had better go slow in his designs against the friendless girl. In fact, she did not again make her home under the same roof with him, but took up her abode in the Kassinger residence upon the invitation of Leonard Kassinger.

Nothing strange could be thought of this, since Theresa and she had ever been intimate friends. In fact, it was looked upon as a most desirable arrangement, and it was one that pleased Mr. Kassinger highly.

Theresa having married, of course her time was not her own as it had been before, and another arrangement of the household was to provide a nurse for Mr. Kassinger.

And who could fill this post so acceptably as Julia Carvingham, recommended by Mildred Daniels?

So it was that two of the Lawyer Detective's aides were placed in the house without suspicion, chiefly for the purpose of seeing to it that Leonard Kassinger did not share the fate of his brother Philip.

Besides this, they were to act the part of detectives in Gale's interest, who was determined not to give up until the truth had been exposed to the light of justice, and the guilty one made to suffer for the deed she had done. This was the understood agreement.

Gale and Gerredson roomed together in Mrs. Carvingham's very exclusive establishment, and together were quietly at work on the case, with aides to help them, seeking to entrap the wily and rascally detective.

One evening as they were together in their room, there came a tap at the door, and Julia Carvingham walked in.

Sight of her face revealed that something was up.

"The thing is coming to a head now," she announced. "That monster goes to-morrow to see the detective."

"Ha! this is good news!" cried Gale. "With this information we can prepare to give them a grand reception and surprise. The denouement will be worth all the worry and trouble."

"And it will be a good thing to have it over," the girl said, "for there is no doubt but the life of her father is in danger. It has taken the constant watching of both Mildred and myself to prevent her from carrying out her purpose—we are sure of it, sir."

"Protect him till to-morrow," said Gerredson, "and the guilty one will be in the place where she put me, and her evil work will be at an end."

"How does her married life progress?" asked the Lawyer-Detective.

The young lady laughed.

"Did you ever see that comic picture of the parrot and the monkey?" she suggestively inquired.

"That is enough," answered Gale. "It is about as I expected. It is a case in which both sides have been neatly trapped, I take it. And it serves them both right."

"The man has decidedly the best of it, though," Julia declared; "or he would have, if they could carry on their pretty game. He knew the secret when he married her, and at once used it against her to extort money, which she has been handing out freely. She, on her part, thought him rich, and he is scarcely worth a dollar."

"To supply the demands of Gower Terwilliger, I have no doubt," observed the Lawyer Detective.

"Yes, your guess is right; he is in the power of that man."

"And I happen to know the secret."

"They are all in for it," averred Gerredson. "Not one of them shall escape, if we can help it, and we are going to do our level best."

The young woman had quite a story to tell,

and a good deal of gossip to deal out, but finally she took her leave, when the two men reviewed the situation and laid their plans for the morrow.

They were astir early, and sought out the lawyers, Hough and Brief, before the time for their going to their office. Arrangements were completed, the aides busy with their respective parts, and all the persons interested were seen and notified to assemble at a certain place at a given hour.

The time of the intended visit of "Theresa" to the detective's office was known, and the fact that she was to go alone.

The lawyers understood this part of the arrangement, knowing the detective would have no witness present in his dealings with the woman, for that would be to place him in her power.

At a very early hour a visit was paid to his office, and a gimlet-hole was bored through the door so that the trap could be sprung at precisely the right time.

A few minutes to nine the rascally detective came to his office, opening it for the business of the day.

Not five minutes later a veiled woman came down the street and entered.

As soon as she had been seen in the office, men entered silently and ascended the stairs, and a policeman in uniform stood with his eye fixed to the hole that had been made in the door.

For a man in citizen's dress to be seen doing such a thing might have caused somebody to question what it meant, and so the plans all brought to naught; but, for an officer to be in that manner engaged would at sight tell the story in part and command respect.

The wait was not a long one; the officer soon gave a signal and threw open the door.

He stepped in, with John Gale, Will Gerredson, and others, each armed with a revolver, and Detective Henry was commanded to throw up his hands and surrender.

That unworthy had sprung to his feet, a big sum of money clutched in his hand, and "Theresa" Kassinger, her veil thrown back, stared at the invaders like one struck powerless, her face like death.

Before there was a chance for either to recover, handcuffs were upon their wrists and they were helpless prisoners.

"What means this?" demanded the detective, with a fine show of dignity.

"No need for you to ask that," answered Gale.

"There is every need why I should ask it. I demand to know the meaning of this outrage, why I should be arrested in my own office!"

"Very well, we will try and satisfy you, then," spoke up Mr. Brief. "Call in all the witnesses and others, Mr. Gerredson, and we'll give them all they want of explanation."

The guilty woman could only sit and stare, her face the picture of agony and fear, her brow damp with perspiration.

Gerredson stepped out for a moment, soon returning with nearly or quite a score of others.

As they filed in, it was explanation enough. Neither the detective nor the guilty woman could doubt that the truth was fully known.

"Beatrice Peyterson," spoke the Lawyer Detective then, "you are arrested for the murder of your uncle, Philip Kassinger, and for the murder of your sister, Theresa Kassinger. There is no room for denial."

She knew it; she hung her head sullenly.

"And you, Henry Henry," he went on, "are arrested on the charge of receiving a bribe from this woman to keep her secret, it having become known to you, and hence you have a share in her guilt. You thought to deceive me, but you see I have overreached you, after all."

Among the others who had come in were Gower Terwilliger and Theodore Peyterson, both prisoners, and Gale now turned to them.

"Need I say upon what charges you are arrested?" he demanded. "You, Theodore Peyterson, for your share in suppressing the matter, as also for the murder of one Antrim Barton, some years ago; and you, Gower Terwilliger, for your holding of that secret for your gain, as well as for the robbing of your orphaned niece and ward."

The rascals, all around, were helpless to say anything in their defense, for well they knew the work of this Lawyer Detective had been only too thoroughly done.

Among those present, besides the names which have been mentioned, were Dr. Paul Kayslee, the Awstins, Mildred Daniels, Mrs. Carvingham and Julia, the prosecuting attorney who would have charge of the matter, and others.

The thought of having Mr. Kassinger present had been considered, but it had been decided that the shock would be too great for him.

It were better, it was thought, that the awful truth should be broken to him as lightly as possible.

The arrests having been made, the Lawyer Detective proceeded to an *exposé* of the crime.

"Here we have," he said, "the explanation of what has been a most wonderful mystery. Here were twin sisters, looking so nearly alike that it was impossible to tell one from the other, almost. One of these was an angel in character

and disposition, comparatively; the other a devil. Beatrice was the latter. Theresa was rich, having been left a big fortune by one of her godmothers, and would come into still greater fortune upon the death of her Uncle Philip, who had willed the bulk of his property to her.

"Leonard Kassinger had become reduced in circumstances, and Beatrice had little save what was given her by her sister, and Theresa was far more generous than would have been expected. She, practically, kept up the establishment, and Beatrice lacked for nothing which she herself had. Beatrice had money from her at any time, and in almost any amount, merely for the asking. This, however, did not satisfy her. She was jealous, and all her evil nature rose to the concocting of a scheme whereby she could dispossess her sister and come into all the wealth herself.

"The first step was to remove the uncle, so that his fortune would be assured, and that was done. Poison was procured and secretly administered, and his death was so sudden that it was attributed to heart failure, he having suffered from heart trouble for years. Then came the task of removing the sister, and in such a way that no suspicion could attach to her-elf. And in this there were more motives than one to be considered. First, the great fortune at stake. Then, Theresa was engaged to marry this rascal Peyton, who was considered very rich. To take her sister's place fully, and wed this man, Beatrice must dispose of her own lover. Why not throw the suspicion of the murder on him?

"So it was done. The secret procuring of the dagger from his room, the quarrel which she forced upon him that night, the blood which she daubed on the sleeve of his coat as it hung in the hall—all these matters were the outcome of long and careful planning on her part. She left nothing undone. Theresa had kept a private diary, which Beatrice had discovered and studied, and this made it the more easy for her to play the rôle she was undertaking. When Gerredson left her in anger that fatal night, she somehow got Theresa into the library, and there took her life. The wonderful nerve of the woman has been shown. It is plain to you now, as she sits here before you, the mask torn away at last. Who could so well imitate the handwriting of the dead Beatrice as she? Her greatest task was to deceive her father, but even in that she succeeded, proving well her native cunning—her devilish art! And see, too, how well she used this sharp sport, Awstin, as a tool to further her designs."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

TRAGIC WIND UP.

THE exposé there in the office of the rascally detective was all that could be desired.

It was more fully made, indeed, than we have indicated, but to detail all was not necessary, since the reader has followed the progress step by step and is in possession of all the points.

The proof of the guilt of the prisoner was conclusive. Every point had been covered. In buying the poison, the thought had come to her to use the name of Mrs. Carvingham, knowing of her and taking the first name that suggested itself when required to give her name and address.

The Lawyer Detective had left nothing wanting. All his witnesses were there, in order that each one might share in the denouement he had planned, and the evidence lacked not a single link. There was the druggist to testify concerning the buying of the poison; there was the analyzing chemist, to support Gale in further proof; there was the traitor-jailer to swear it was this woman who had bribed him; and here they had the forged written confession, supporting the whole—evidence enough, surely.

Gale had not quite done, when the woman raised her eyes from the floor, where she had been holding them, and said:

"You need not go further, sir; I admit it in the main. You are wrong in one point, however: I am the dear, angelic Theresa, after all! I defy you to prove to the contrary if you can."

"Vain lie!" returned Gale, in his cool, quiet way. "That is the point I was just coming at, having laid bare everything else. If you have a scar on your right arm, on the under side, a long, thread-like line, then you are Beatrice; and you have, for we have taken up the body of your murdered sister, and no such mark is upon her!"

This was then explained and the proof stated, when the prisoner was ordered to stand up in order that her arm might be bared.

She stood up, saying as she did so:

"I do not deny it longer! Release my hand, and I will show my arm. You have overcome me, and I give up."

Her hands were freed, and no sooner done than she clapped something into her mouth and swallowed it.

"Ha, ha, ha!" she defiantly laughed. "I have been prepared for it, from the first! Examine my arm if you want to; in a few minutes I shall be dead at your feet."

It was what had been looked for—that is, that

she would attempt something of the kind; but it had been thought she would have to produce the poison from her pocket, or garments, and so could be prevented in any attempt to thwart the law.

She sunk back upon her chair as she finished speaking, when, almost at once, a change came over her face. It was death; no one could doubt it; the doctor present said it was, and that nothing on earth could avert it, for it was prussic acid she had swallowed! And, as they looked upon her, one and all silently agreed that it was better so.

Leonard Kassinger bore the shock better than could have been expected.

He mourned for Theresa, his beloved daughter, but for the immeasurably wicked Beatrice he had neither tear nor regret.

She had been evil from birth, he declared. Evil and good had not been commingled in the natures of the twins; one had possessed all the good, the other all the bad, apparently.

The rascals of the frightful scheme were punished, every one, getting their full deserts for their crimes. The Lawyer Detective, so-called, received highest credit for what he had done, and it was the acknowledged fact that, but for him, William Gerredson would have suffered death.

Mildred Daniels had her fortune restored, the little that Terwilliger had left of it, but she inherited the Kassinger wealth besides. As Gerredson came to know her better, he loved her, and in due time they were made one.

The same fate overtook John Gale and Julia Carvingham. At last the love affairs of these girls had been directed in the right channels.

THE END.

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